

University of Southern Queensland



Institutional Assessment Framework (IAF) Information Collection 2007

Equity Update 2007

Endorsement by USQ CEO:

**Professor Bill Lovegrove,
Vice-Chancellor and President**

Statement of accuracy

The University of Southern Queensland is committed to assisting disadvantaged students. The 2007 Equity Update verifies that USQ is compliant with the conditions of Equity Support Program Guidelines and Disability Support Program Guidelines, meets all criteria outlined in paragraph 1.45.1(a)-(d) in the guidelines, and undertakes activities that are consistent with the aims of the programs (paragraph 1.5.1) and this has been demonstrated throughout this Equity Update.

Professor William Lovegrove
Vice-Chancellor and President

USQ Equity Update 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement of accuracy	2
FOREWORD	4
A. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006	4
B. EQUITY GROUP FOCUS AND KEY EQUITY STRATEGIES	5
EQUITY GROUPS TARGETED IN 2006.....	5
KEY EQUITY STRATEGIES FOR 2007.....	6
C. EQUITY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN 2006	9
D. PERFORMANCE OF EQUITY GROUPS IN 2005	13
E. HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME (ESP) FUNDED INITIATIVES	14
F. HIGHER EDUCATION DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME (DSP) FUNDED INITIATIVES	19
Additional Support for Students with Disabilities Program (ASSD).....	19
Regional Disability Liaison Officer (RDLO) initiative	19
G. COMMONWEALTH LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS (CLS).....	20
H. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ESP FUNDING IN 2008.....	21
1. Outreach programs	21
2. Support services	27
3. Commonwealth Learning Scholarships.....	32
4. Institutional equity scholarships	32
UNIVERSITY CONTACT OFFICERS	34

FOREWORD

- This statement has been prepared in accordance with the published guidelines, *Institutional Assessment Framework Information Collection 2007: Instructions* (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2007).
- Note is made of the Higher Education Support Program (ESP) and Higher Education Disability Support Program (DSP) Guidelines published as part of the Higher Education Support Act 2003, accessible from: [http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/LegislativeInstrument1.nsf/0/1B5D3F1E13DEC2AFCA2572CD007CA921/\\$file/INSTRUMENTAttachmentAAmendmentNo3OGGRevisedGuidelinesChapt.pdf](http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/LegislativeInstrument1.nsf/0/1B5D3F1E13DEC2AFCA2572CD007CA921/$file/INSTRUMENTAttachmentAAmendmentNo3OGGRevisedGuidelinesChapt.pdf).
- The *USQ Indigenous Education Statement 2007* describing the full scope of USQ's indigenous education program is available separately.

A. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

Faculty Equity Committees

Equity committees have been established within the Faculty of Business, Faculty of Sciences and the Learning & Teaching Support Unit with plans for further equity committees to be established throughout other sections of the University. These committees have roles to oversee and implement faculty initiatives to support the learning & teaching and overall student experience needs of enrolled and prospective students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as to develop local responses to the University's stated Equity and Multiculturalism Goal.

Improved scholarship arrangements

The USQ Equity Scholarships aim to support students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds who are suffering significant financial hardship. This scholarship scheme was reviewed in an attempt to determine a way to support a larger proportion of students and also address individual need. They were subsequently redesigned to provide options for scholarship recipients who could either receive a lump sum payment, a book bursary, or a personal laptop computer supplied with Microsoft Office software. The DELL laptop arrangement was achieved through a collaborative partnership with DELL that supported a bulk purchase at a significantly reduced cost for the University. The laptop aims to give the USQ student mobility to cater for their diverse backgrounds.

Online Course for Inclusive Learning and Teaching at USQ

An online workshop has been developed for academic staff that allows them to access information and resources in order to develop and implement strategies for enhanced inclusive learning and teaching at USQ. This information includes detail enabling academics to comply with legislative requirements and provide a best practice model for teaching and learning catering for a diverse student body.

B. EQUITY GROUP FOCUS AND KEY EQUITY STRATEGIES

EQUITY GROUPS TARGETED IN 2006

USQ has always stated its aim is to sustain a learning environment that promotes success for all of its students. USQ has a high proportion of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students from rural and geographically isolated areas with a growing body of students from other equity groups. As a result of this and USQ's commitment to provide an inclusive learning environment for all students, USQ provides a wide range of programs and services that target all identified equity groups. By virtue of its heavy involvement in distance and flexible education, USQ also targets programs to specific groups that typically overlap with one or more of the Commonwealth identified equity groups; such as offenders in custody, mature-age, second-chance learners, first generation students and parents/carers.

In line with these commitments, over the past twelve months there has been a relatively even spread of support and development of new initiatives supporting the broad diversity of the student population. USQ sees this as appropriate to its mission and its place as a regional university.

Major issues faced by the equity groups in USQ's catchment area

USQ has a high proportion of students from low socioeconomic, low income backgrounds and from rural and geographically isolated areas. Students in these groups present in a variety of ways – as financially disadvantaged; as 'first generation' students (that is, the first in their family to attend higher education); as 'second chance learners' (that is, students returning to education as adults after missing educational opportunities in their youth); or as educationally disadvantaged. Low socioeconomic background is also the most common factor in multiple disadvantage. With regard to its local communities, USQ Fraser Coast is located in a region with a high level of economic disadvantage as is USQ Springfield which is also placed in the Inala/Ipswich/Logan Corridor that is renowned for its diverse cultural communities and the Darling Downs, Fraser Coast and Springfield areas have higher education attainment below state and national averages.

Greater Toowoomba is now home to a large and growing population of refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), particularly from Sudan. Many students from this group are now accessing the Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP enabling program) and undergraduate programs at USQ. Coming from a vastly different culture to Australia – typically from a background of educational disadvantage and societal turmoil due to war and famine – these students tend to have particular needs which are often intensive of staff time. Students from this group are considered as high risk of poor performance and progression. The USQ Fraser Coast campus on the central Queensland coast also serves South Sea Islander students who represent an important NESB grouping in the region and who are classified specifically by the Queensland government as a disadvantaged group. The USQ Springfield campus is forging partnerships and raising aspirations for higher education amongst Pacific Island communities in their local area.

There are changing trends in the type of students with disability accessing USQ. USQ is experiencing significant growth in the number of students with high needs who are accessing disability services and support. Specialised support requirements, intensive time and resources are being committed to supporting this growing body of students. Amongst these high needs students, are students with vision impairments and there is a growing interest in the blind community for students to access USQ due to the individualised, tailored and efficient support services USQ provides. Many of USQ's students with disability study off-campus on a part-time basis however it has been determined that their geographical location rather than their disability had the greatest influence on student's mode of study and subsequently their opportunities for success and access to support services.

USQ faces particular issues in considerations of gender equity. For example, as USQ offers one of the only fully-distance engineering programs it recruits heavily from the existing engineering and related professions, which are skewed towards representation by males. Hence, USQ has found it even more difficult than other universities who recruit largely from more gender-balanced school-leaver populations to increase female participation in its engineering programs without the employment of highly resource intensive strategies which are difficult to maintain. Also, USQ is not a major provider of engineering programs that have been found to be attractive to female applicants – having no chemical engineering program and only a small involvement in environmental engineering is a possible cause. However, the Faculty continues to be engaged in a variety of outreach programs that aim to increase female participation.

Over recent years USQ has appeared to experience a gradual decline in the proportion of female students in information technology (IT), with a participation ratio that now sits below the national average. This apparent trend has been identified as a priority area for the faculties; although it is a difficult trend to address as it is occurring in conjunction with an overall decline in demand for IT programs that runs contrary to market logic. A low participation by males in some professional disciplines – particularly the national priority areas of nursing and teaching – is a concern in that although the basis for these gender imbalances cannot be considered to be related to issues of equity, any severe gender imbalance does nonetheless serve to compromise the rigour of the professions concerned. USQ is attempting to address this gender imbalance in education and nursing.

KEY EQUITY STRATEGIES FOR 2007

- **Review of social justice policies** – USQ is undergoing a comprehensive review and rewrite of key student social justice policies that will enable clearer guidelines for supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Current policies undergoing review are: Anti-discrimination and Freedom from Harassment Policy, Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Harassment Grievance Procedure, Student Support Policy, Equity in Education Policy and Supporting Students with Disability Policy. Throughout this process two further documents/policies have been developed including a Student Charter of Rights and Responsibilities and a Declaration of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Higher Education.
- **Accessibility maps** – accessibility maps for Springfield and Fraser Coast campuses are currently being developed to complement the Toowoomba campus

accessibility map. These maps are designed to highlight accessible pathways across the campuses to support the participation of people with specialised mobility needs.

- **Multifaith Centre** – USQ recently reviewed its Policy on Religious Services and a Multifaith Centre is currently being established to support the diverse religious aspirations of students and staff on campus.
- **Collecting/analysing/reporting equity data** – an evaluation of current processes to collect and analyse key equity performance data including scholarships is underway. This process will facilitate reporting requirements to the Department of Education, Science and Training and allow the University to better evaluate its progress.
- **ARC Linkage Grant** - USQ is in partnership with the University of Queensland and Griffith University in a current submission to the Australian Research Council to explore the aspirations of people within the Inala/Ipswich/Logan Corridor to enter into higher education and how universities can participate in raising those aspirations. The Inala/Ipswich/Logan Corridor is known as a pocket of disadvantage with a high proportion of families from non-English speaking backgrounds and from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- **National Indigenous Cadetship Program** – The National Indigenous Cadetship Program (NICP) is an initiative of the Department of Employment & Workplace Relations (DEWR). USQ has joined forces with DEWR to improve the work skills and employment outcomes of Indigenous students through assisting students to enhance the skills required in the workplace and to provide the student with practical industry experience and employment opportunities.
- **Equity Incentives Fund** – ongoing implementation of the competitive grants scheme aimed at supporting projects that will impact on the access, progression and retention rates of students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Awareness and education campaigns** – students and staff of the University will be exposed to a broad education campaign detailing their rights and responsibilities around harassment and discrimination issues providing clear pathways for resolution and support both internal and external to the USQ boundary. Also the USQ community will be educated on the benefits of multiculturalism to further our leadership in this area and create a culturally aware community.
- **Expansion of services of vision impaired students** – alternative formatting services are being expanded throughout 2007 to accommodate for the growing number of students with vision impairments enrolling at USQ.
- **Teaching and learning resources for academic staff** – development of a suite of discipline specific resources for academic staff to enable them to develop inclusive curriculum including Indigenous perspectives as well as resources to support their delivery of teaching material to a diverse student body.
- **Student financial loans scheme** – expansion of eligible purchases under the Student Financial Loans Scheme to incorporate the purchase of a personal computer to improve access to information technology for students who otherwise would not be able to afford one.
- **Greater suite of equity scholarships** - the Faculty of Business has introduced Postgraduate Equity Scholarships. Ten postgraduate scholarships for on-campus or external students enrolling in or enrolled in, any postgraduate (coursework) Masters Degree or Postgraduate Certificate in Management

program offered by the Faculty. Each scholarship is valued at \$5,000. These will be offered on an annual basis.

- **Improving pathways into USQ** - offering of one course from the Tertiary Preparation Program (USQ's enabling program) to Year 11 students who attend secondary schools in the Springfield area of greater Brisbane. This program specifically targets students who potentially are the first member of their family to attend university and is therefore designed to attract and engage Year 11 students who may not be anticipating a university education but would benefit from a higher education experience as part of their secondary school studies. The program has enrolled 30 students in 2007 from 5 local schools. Success with this first TPP course will lead to further enrolment in a core component of the TPP during the Year 12 studies of the student. Subsequent success will lead to direct entry to USQ undergraduate programs.
- **Ongoing commemoration of special events** – USQ will continue to celebrate and acknowledge such events as Harmony Day, National Day of Healing and Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and Disability Action Week.
- **Outreach** – increasing outreach to rural and remote communities that enable individuals to experience University life including Year 10 students who would have access to the USQ Fraser Coast campus.
- **First year students' transition reference group** – engaging self-identified 'at-risk' students from the Faculty of Education with academic staff to problem solve and discuss strategies to support their success.
- **Local Employers' Breakfast** – planning is underway for an end-of-year Employers' Breakfast to be hosted by Commerce Qld, local Disability Employment Networks and the RDLO position for the express purpose of promoting the benefits of employing USQ and SQIT graduates with disabilities in local businesses.
- **Promotional material for prospective students with disability - 2007** Transition package for students with disabilities have been distributed to 80 secondary schools across the region; a CD on disability support at USQ; "Leaps and Bounds" – the South Qld RDLO transition guide for students with disabilities is being updated and will be distributed mid-year to secondary schools within the region.
- **Toowoomba Flexi School pathways** - This project provides opportunities for students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to make the transition to tertiary study. Ten students from the Toowoomba Flexi School (an alternative school for students who have been excluded from other educational systems) began preparation courses at USQ at the end of 2006. Of those, five students are continuing with first year university studies and progressing well. The staff supervising the students also provide tutorial assistance with assignments; enrolment and subject selection; career advice and information; and liaison with lecturers. Benefits to the students from this program include a strong improvement in their overall academic achievement status for their year twelve results as well as the reduction of the barrier to access and participation in higher education through improved confidence in their own ability.

C. EQUITY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN 2006

Social Justice Committee Framework

The Social Justice Committee framework provides a greater level of coordination of equity and equal opportunity activities, and ensuring stronger linkages to the decision making structures in the University. The overarching Social Justice Committee is grounded in three principles:

1. the need for USQ to ensure that recent equity-related developments initiated by Commonwealth and State Governments are provided the maximum possible degree of structural and policy support; thus ensuring their successful implementation and long-term sustainability;
2. the need to recognise the outstanding work done at USQ over many years by a number of committees, groups and individuals in relation to key aspects of equity and social justice; and hence to seek to retain these features; and,
3. the need to ensure that the equity and social justice principles in USQ's Equity & Multiculturalism Goal within its Strategic Plan 2005-2009 are provided with concrete vehicles for transposition into the work practices and culture of the University.

The committee framework involves the Social Justice Committee, with senior representation serving as the overarching senior management committee responsible to the Vice-Chancellor, with six specialist subcommittees reporting to it - Disability Advisory Committee, Status of Women in Employment & Education Committee, Indigenous Affairs Committee, Multicultural and Transnational Advisory Committee, Student Equity Network and the Staff Equity Advisory Committee. Each specialist subcommittee includes broad representation by staff working in relevant operational areas and is chaired by a senior manager who is an ex officio member of the Social Justice Committee – thus providing strong linkages between the managerial/strategic and operational elements of the University in the area of equity.

USQ Strategic Plan – Equity & Multiculturalism Goal

USQ structures its strategic plan around eight major goal areas. One of these goal areas is Equity & Multiculturalism, with the other areas including learning & teaching, student experience and research & commercialisation. USQ's Equity & Multiculturalism goal is:

To encourage diverse staff and student profiles, to build an environment which fosters inclusion and successful participation by people from diverse backgrounds, and to support the realisation of multiculturalism in the University and broader community.

It is also noted that USQ has: “a particular emphasis... to [support] the aspirations of Indigenous Australians.”

(<http://www.usq.edu.au/planstats/Planning/Docs/USQStrategicPlan.doc>)

All USQ faculty and organisational sections are required to develop objectives and strategies as part of the annual strategic planning process that supports the University achieving identified targets in each of its identified Goal areas – including for Equity & Multiculturalism. The Key Performance Indicators in the area of Equity

& Multiculturalism relate to the performance of students in identified equity groups and gender equity in employment.

Policies

The University states that it values diversity and promotes student equity in the following statements:

"[USQ] is highly regarded for its learning and teaching excellence...multiculturalism and effective engagement with the community"... "it will continue to improve learning and increase access through innovative pedagogy and the creative use of technology." (USQ Vision: <http://www.usq.edu.au/resources/1111.pdf>)

"The University of Southern Queensland works with its stakeholders to develop a knowledgeable and cultured society enriched through...social equity"; "The University serves its multicultural community by preparing global citizens for life-long learning in a diverse and changing world." (USQ Mission: <http://www.usq.edu.au/resources/11.pdf>)

"In pursuit of its Mission, the USQ commits to ... supporting social justice and multiculturalism and appreciating the value of difference and diversity...caring for the individual through approaches that are fair, inclusive and equitable..." (USQ Values: <http://www.usq.edu.au/resources/12.pdf>)

USQ Directions – Key Strategic Area 1: USQ as Australia's Leading Transnational Educator – planning principle:
*"a university which welcomes students and staff from diverse backgrounds";
"an emphasis on learning and teaching practices for a diverse student body."
(<http://www.usq.edu.au/vc/directpp/default.htm>)*

USQ Strategic Plan – Learning & Teaching goal:
*"To produce graduates from a diverse student community with discipline expertise and generic attributes prepared for success transnationally".
(<http://www.usq.edu.au/planstats/Planning/Docs/USQStrategicPlan.doc>)*

"Educational equity in higher education involves engaging in inclusive action to provide opportunities for access to all groups in Australian society and equitable opportunities for their success." (USQ Equity in Education Policy: <http://www.usq.edu.au/resources/127.pdf>)

In addition, USQ is a signatory to the Queensland Government's 'Affirmation of Diversity' – committed to fostering an inclusive teaching and learning environment.

The *USQ Disability Action Plan (DAP)*, ratified by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in 2000, provides a systematic structure of evaluating our progress in achieving a physical and cultural, as well as teaching and learning, environment that supports individuals with disability.

USQ is undergoing a comprehensive review and rewrite of key student social justice policies that will enable clearer guidelines for supporting students from

disadvantaged backgrounds. Current policies undergoing review are: Anti-discrimination and Freedom from Harassment Policy, Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Harassment Grievance Procedure, Student Support Policy, Equity in Education Policy and Supporting Students with Disability Policy. Throughout this process two further documents/policies have been developed including a Student Charter of Rights and Responsibilities and a Declaration of Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Higher Education. The following policies are currently in operation:

- Policy for People with Disabilities
- Policy on Student Advice, Student Welfare and Pastoral Support
- Policy on Multiculturalism
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Racial Discrimination Policy
- Equity in Education Policy

Dean of Students

The new position of Dean of Students was filled at the end of May 2006. During the year, the Dean took on responsibility for organising orientations, helped refine the role of the Indigenous Education Consultant (in the Learning and Teaching Support Unit), took up the position of Convenor, Student Equity Network, and developed a strategic plan for Dean of Students' activities for the following five years. The strategic plan focuses on formalising the role of the Dean of Students in advocacy for the student interest and developing pastoral care practices for students, particularly students at risk and students from a low socio-economic background. The Dean of Students has the primary responsibility to oversee the implementation of institutional strategies impacting on student retention, transition and the overall student experience with a particular interest in supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Student Equity Office

The Student Equity Office furthers the University's commitment to providing fair access and participation for all in higher education, thereby supporting the University's values in promoting diversity. The Office has institutional responsibilities for strategically driving, developing and evaluating equity initiatives including policy and governance. It works directly with staff from all faculties and organisational sections within the University to develop, facilitate and encourage key strategies to support the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. It engages in projects that help to improve the USQ experience for students from disadvantaged backgrounds including managing the review of the suite of social justice policies. It also incorporates the USQ Scholarships Office that manages all student scholarships, including those provided by the Commonwealth.

USQ Multicultural Centre

Formally opened in 2006, the Centre aims to: reinforce USQ's leadership in multiculturalism within the Australian higher education system and overseas; to contribute to the unique identity of USQ by developing innovative programs on multiculturalism; to develop closer cooperation between the governments and non-government organisations at local, state and national level in the area of

multiculturalism; and to promote the concept of multiculturalism and its benefits in practice. The Centre is responsible for coordinating the University's response to major cultural events such as Harmony Day and the National Day of Healing, and plays a significant role in regional engagement and equity research. It provides support to the Multicultural and Multilingual Students Association and the Multicultural Staff Network.

Faculty/Section Equity Committees

Equity committees have been established within the Faculty of Business, Faculty of Sciences and the Learning & Teaching Support Unit with plans for further equity committees to be established throughout other sections of the University. These committees have roles to oversee and implement faculty initiatives to support the learning & teaching and overall student experience needs of enrolled and prospective students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as to develop local responses to the University's stated Equity and Multiculturalism Goal.

Institutional committees and their associated representations

Institution Committee	Equity/disability representation	How do they operate?
Senior Leadership Committee	Equity groups represented by the Dean of Students and Group Manager, Student Affairs (who oversees the Student Equity Office)	Fortnightly meeting of executive managers of the University
Social Justice Committee	Student equity groups represented by all organisational sections across the University with two student representatives that fit into one or more of the equity categories elected by the student body, currently filled by an Indigenous Australian and a student with disability from a low socioeconomic background	Meet five times per year with reports from each of its subcommittees and discussion on equity management issues for the University; reports to Vice-Chancellor
Disability Advisory Committee	Disability support sections and faculty disability support officers with four student representatives elected by the student body, currently three of which have disability	Meet six times per year to oversee disability support at USQ, as well as oversee the implementation and review of the Disability Action Plan
Indigenous Affairs Committee	Indigenous staff representation, two x Indigenous student representatives, two x Indigenous community representatives, and two x Torres Strait Islander community representatives	Meet four times per year to provide strategic advice to the University considering the teaching, learning, research, policy and to provide a forum for discussion on Indigenous higher education issues
Multicultural & Transnational Advisory Committee	Staff representation from support services across USQ and one student representative including representation from the Multicultural and Multilingual Students Association	Meet five times per year to advise the University on matters related to multiculturalism

(continued)...

Institution Committee	Equity/disability representation	How do they operate?
Status of Women in Employment & Education Committee	Female staff representing a range of sections and levels across the University plus one co-opted student representative	Meet five times per year to advise the University on best practice, guide the implementation of USQ's gender balance targets and equal opportunity practices
Student Equity Network	Convened by the Dean of Students. Staff representation across the entire USQ network plus four student representatives from identified equity groups, taking into consideration – at least one of external study mode, balance of gender, balance of school-leaver and mature-age students.	Meet five times per year however also function via an informal network throughout the year as a forum to discuss common issues, develop and implement equity initiatives.
Faculty of Business Equal Opportunity and Social Justice Committee	Staff representation from equity and equal opportunity units or support services across the University	Primary role to oversee and prioritise the implementation of the actions recommended through a recent review
Faculty of Sciences Equity Committee	Faculty staff plus three student representatives currently held by students that have one or more of the following backgrounds: from a rural area, non-English speaking background, with disability, a male enrolled in a non-traditional area of study (Nursing), and low socioeconomic background	Develop and oversee the implementation of the Faculty of Sciences Equity Plan and report to Faculty of Sciences Board
Learning & Teaching Support Unit (LTSU) Equity Committee	Ensuring gender balance of staff representatives	Oversee all equal opportunity, equity and social justice related matters with regard to staff, students, programs and activities of the Department; plays a key strategic role in the Department to ensure that principles of equity and justice are adhered to.

D. PERFORMANCE OF EQUITY GROUPS IN 2005

Group	Relevant Indicator	Key trend or shift in the data	Explanation
Non-English Speaking Background	Access %	Increase from 2004 to 2005	An increase in transition of NESB students (particularly Sudanese) from our enabling program and increased entry from Sudanese community into award programs; growing population of Sudanese refugee community in Toowoomba plus Springfield and Fraser Coast campuses attracting students from

			their local communities (Pacific Islander and South Sea Islander)
Disability	Access %	Decline below state and national averages	Performance data pertaining to students with disability is currently undergoing a significant analysis including investigation and review of our data collection, reporting methods, and apparent performance decline. While we are eliminating a range of hypotheses, initial information to date may indicate that the decline in access for students with disability is consistent with a drop in performance in commencing Commonwealth supported students in Faculties of Business, Education and Sciences however investigations are continuing.
Rural	Participation %	Increase from 2004 to 2005	Reflecting a pipeline increase as a result of increased access rates from years previous.

E. HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME (ESP) FUNDED INITIATIVES

Key initiative title	Brief description	Outcomes
USQ Equity Scholarships	Scholarships available to students who are experiencing financial hardship and are members of one or more of the DEST equity groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 students in receipt of a DELL laptop • 25 students in receipt of lump sum payments totalling \$3,000 • 50 students in receipt of \$750 book bursaries • Positive feedback received by successful candidates
Equity/Careers Nexus	Programs designed to support the career education and advice to students (current and prospective) who come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Outreach programs • Resources for prospective students including Family Guide to USQ • Students have greater awareness of their career possibilities
RDLO support	Operating budget to enable travel to areas such as Stanthorpe, Goondiwindi, Roma, Charleville, Kingaroy, Gympie, the Wide Bay region and part of the West Moreton Region (Springfield, Ipswich and the Lockyer Valley) in order to establish and maintain vital links with prospective students/employees with disabilities in these areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of rural and regional students with disabilities who are attending the three Tertiary Taster programs that are offered in 2007 • An increase in the number of requests for information about tertiary study support from regional schools, community groups and individuals for 2007 • An increase in the number of requests for USQ enrolment information because of heightened awareness of further education opportunities for people with disabilities arising from RDLO visits to their communities • An increase, in 2007, in the number of Disability Education and Employment Provider Networks (that are directly related to RDLO intervention)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increase, in 2007, in the number of members of established Disability Support Providers' Networks within the RDLO's regions (that are directly related to RDLO intervention)
Tertiary Taste Program	Aimed at enhancing post-secondary education, training and employment opportunities for people with a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three-day workshop for year 11 and 12 students with a disability to assist them to understand career pathways available at a tertiary level, to provide an overview of tertiary study, and to provide information about how their individual needs can be accommodated Increased interest in the Tertiary Taste Program amongst the disability community
Support the establishment of infrastructure	Student Equity Officer, Scholarships Officer, Dean of Students, Disability Planning Officer, Multicultural Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New positions created at USQ to enable oversight, leadership, monitoring, and direct operational support to student equity initiatives Positions have received positive support from local USQ community Positions have undertaken a broad variety of initiatives to date having an immediate impact on student equity
Staff training	Programs designed to improve the capacity of USQ staff to support students from diverse backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs held over to the 2007 year
Multicultural events		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islamic Centre Open Day Youth Program Living in Harmony project – Indigenous and Sudanese Youth Harmony Day Reconciliation Week Toowoomba Language and Cultural Festival Moon Cake Festival Bunka no hi – Japanese cultural evening Multicultural Youth Flying Camp Seminars Students and USQ community have greater awareness of cross-cultural issues and greater capacity to support the interests of diverse student body
Review of social justice policies	A review and re-write of student social justice policies to ensure they meet current legislative requirements, create an inclusive educational environment, and support the individual interests of a diverse student body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies are currently in draft form being reviewed by the Senior Leadership Committee before approval by USQ Council
Conferences	Small grants process designed to support the attendance of USQ staff at key professional development activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff supported to a range of conferences/seminars including Equal Opportunity Practitioners in Higher Education (EOPHEA) Conference, National Association for Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS)

		<p>Conference, Pathways 8 Conference etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct initiatives have been established at USQ as a result of staff becoming aware of best practice initiatives in student equity
Collaborative projects	Funds set aside to support an ARC Linkage Grant application that is currently being assessed looking at raising aspirations for higher education in a low socio-economic status community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awaiting outcomes of ARC Linkage Grant application – a joint partnership between USQ, UQ and Griffith University
NESB suite of support services	A new suite of support initiatives to be developed to target USQ's NESB students with aim of improving their student experience and providing them with a sense of belonging; this suite will be developed concurrently with a research project to evaluate the student group's needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination that few NESB students participated in the action-oriented research project • Outcomes are still being assessed with results to be identified by end 2007
Disability Action Week	A range of events designed to celebrate the abilities of individuals with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community outreach • School education • Program given positive feedback and media coverage by local media and schools
Inclusive perspectives in the curriculum	Initiative designed to implement inclusive perspectives into the USQ curriculum including Indigenous perspectives and provide support to curriculum development with consideration of students from diverse backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project is a two year pilot, outcomes to be assessed at the end of the two year period (mid 2008)
Employers Making a Difference (EMAD)	Involvement of an external body to assist USQ to assess its support to students and staff with a disability – including analysis of policy and use of local graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes not yet identified as analysis still to be conducted, expected outcome due end 2007
Equity Incentives Fund projects		
Accessible websites	Reviewing and redesigning web content of student support websites to comply with W3C Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible websites supporting the access of students with disability, from isolated locations with poor download speed, and students from a non-English speaking background • Compliance with W3C Guidelines
Indigenous Guide to USQ	Resource for the families of prospective Indigenous students who come from rural and isolated areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print occurred in 2007, awaiting outcomes
DAISY project	Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) – trialling new technology for alternative formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAISY formatted materials are able to be produced through the Disability Resources – Assistive Technologies section at USQ • Waiting to be trialled by USQ student in semester 2, 2007
USQ's HERE	Higher Education Rural Experience (HERE) - a residential school for children from across regional QLD and northern NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and educational orientation • Career education and advice

Support for refugee enabling students	Provision of dictionaries to Sudanese students undertaking the Tertiary Preparation Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 dictionaries • Survey indicates positive support and success gleaned from students • High transfer rate into award programs • Proportion still undertaking preparatory studies in 2007, outcomes yet to be assessed
Creating foundations	Learner-centred tutorials for first-year students – pilot project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of satisfaction by participants (NESB students) • Establishment of social networks for students • Support for ongoing 'study groups' for students with similar learning needs
Supporting NESB students	Initiatives to support the integration and social adjustment of students from a non-English speaking background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness to NESB students of the Multicultural and Multilingual Students Association (MMSA) • Broader range of activities undertaken by Multicultural Centre to improve acculturation of NESB students • Growing membership of MMSA
Indigenous Nursing Textbooks	Supply of nursing textbooks to the growing body of Indigenous nursing students who experience financial hardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of textbooks for students who do not have the financial means to access these expensive textbooks individually
Indigenous postgraduate room	Resources available for Indigenous postgraduate students in the Faculty of Sciences who come from rural and isolated areas or come from low socio-economic backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate room in operation • Utilised by postgraduate Indigenous students on a regular basis
Diversity in Nursing	Creation of a DVD raising the profile of nursing as a career for a diversity of individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DVD created • Utilised in outreach programs and recruiting exercises • DVD to be utilised throughout 2007 therefore outcomes are yet to be assessed
Biology workshops at Wide Bay	Outreach science program to rural and remote secondary students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial program hosted 6 schools oncampus • 13 schools registered with programs continuing throughout 2007 • 58% of students expressed a greater interest in studying science following secondary education • Positive feedback from workshops • Program to be ongoing due to success
Financial literacy of students	Assessment of financial literacy of scholarship holders and loan applicants at USQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of financial literacy assessed • Intervention program designed • Program to be delivered in 2007, outcomes yet to be assessed
Women's Network	Increased resourcing to USQ Women's Network to enable a safe space for women students and staff to meet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of students in membership • Executive including students as members • Safe/supportive meeting place
Graduates with disabilities	Pre-employment seminar conducted for students with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs analysis conducted of current students with disability

	potential employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminars conducted • Students accessed careers advice, information regarding resume writing, interview techniques, and rights around disclosure of disability • Post-seminar survey conducted revealed positive support for workshop
Using English language effectively	Staff development exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong collegiality developed amongst staff • Positive support for training • Greater capacity to support students from a diversity of cultural backgrounds
Inclusiveness workshops	Experiential workshops designed to improve appreciation for disability and methods to overcome barriers for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops are still being conducted in 2007, outcomes to be known by end 2007
Creating opportunities and learning together	Pilot program designed to provide pathways for Indigenous secondary students into USQ by accessing our Indigenous Higher Education Pathways Program (IHEPP) throughout secondary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student are still undertaking the preparatory program, results/outcomes will be unknown until the 2008 year
Student success through leadership	Enhance retention and success rates of disadvantaged students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor program to be investigated in 2007 – early results indicate strong support by students however are time poor • Student Support Officer position trialled – once aware, students made good use of services • Positive support for piloted position by students • Recommendation made to Faculty for ongoing support of position
Adjunct childcare centre	Pilot program to provide child care support to students with parental responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of the child care facility • Outcomes pertaining to attendance at USQ lectures/tutorials still being assessed
Indigenous mature-age students	Program to aspire aspirations in mature-age Indigenous workers to access tertiary education to improve their career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes will become known in semester 2, 2007 or 2008 year

NB: a proportion of these projects were not able to be rolled out in 2006 and therefore funds were carried over to enable projects to continue into 2007

F. HIGHER EDUCATION DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME (DSP) FUNDED INITIATIVES

Key initiative title	Brief description	Outcomes
Project – online program - inclusive teaching and learning	Cross-disciplinary, hybrid-delivery model for professional development of teaching staff to enhance inclusivity in learning and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibly available online course available introducing inclusive approaches and introducing the national CATS website • Collegial workshops held providing deeper learning experiences
Assistive Technology Room resources and equipment	Resources/equipment to be available at each campus for students to access that meets with their learning needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialised software • Modified furniture • Specialised equipment

Additional Support for Students with Disabilities Program (ASSD)

- USQ supported 27 high needs students in 2006 and ASSD funding enabled individualised support including alternative formatting of materials, support workers, equipment and software.
- While the number of students accessing specific disability services is remaining relatively consistent over time, the number of high needs students is increasing annually.
- In 2006, high expense was incurred purchasing specialised equipment (eg. High adjustable tables, Brailling equipment) to provide support to students that previously were not available/not required.
- It is important for USQ that there is a balance in the type of reimbursement made under ASSD funding and that the current threshold remains at \$500 per student. Whilst USQ incurred a high expense in 2006, much of the equipment expenditure to date has been incurred in establishing appropriate physical environments and technical programs; we would therefore envisage that this level of expenditure would not be required recurrently.
- To explore options with the ASSD funding that would allow a marginal increase in the available funds under the performance-based funding would be of high benefit to USQ as this funding enables USQ to provide support to a larger proportion of students with disability, not just those with high needs.

Regional Disability Liaison Officer (RDLO) initiative

- Federal Government funding for the 2006 RDLO position only covers salary and basic administrative costs, leaving minimum funding for travel costs to regional and remote centres that are located within its boundaries.
- USQ provided the RDLO with an operating budget to enable travel to areas such as Stanthorpe, Goondiwindi, Roma, Charleville, Kingaroy, Gympie, the Wide Bay region and part of the West Moreton Region (Springfield, Ipswich and the Lockyer Valley) in order to establish and maintain vital links with prospective students/employees with disabilities in these areas.

- The RDLO has played an integral role in the development and support of the Disability Resources section in Student Services, contributes to the development of staff at USQ, plays a major role in USQ events, and participates in essential University processes to facilitate best practice. USQ, as a regional institution, greatly value the RDLO concept as a result.

G. COMMONWEALTH LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS (CLS)

The following points should be noted:

- The Commonwealth Learning Scholarships (CLS) are administered by the Scholarships Officer in the Student Equity Office of the University's Student Services.
- The CLS allocation and review process is governed by a set of procedures which take into account the applicants' and recipients' financial and personal circumstances apropos of the Commonwealth criteria. The allocation process, in particular, entails review by a panel of professionals with expertise in the area of counselling and supporting the welfare needs of disadvantaged clients (i.e., psychologists and counsellors). Whilst this process does create a significant burden on the workload of the professionals, this additional level of professional assessment ensures that applicants and recipients receive the highest level of assessment reliability and validity; which would not otherwise be possible if the process was managed by administrative professionals only, who did not possess expertise in the area of counselling and welfare.
- USQ was able to allocate all of its CLS in 2006 due to the high proportion of students who access the University who come from backgrounds of financial hardship and educational disadvantage.
- There are a high number of students that apply each round who are eligible for CLS who are unsuccessful. Due to the high number of eligible applicants, USQ undertakes a model that prioritises applicants with multiple disadvantage. This process enables the University to process applications systematically and offers an accountable process for administering the many applicants who are suffering financial hardship. This process, not unlike any other, still finds a proportion of students who would be deemed eligible for a CLS but nonetheless are unsuccessful in their application.
- Students who receive a USQ Equity Scholarship face considerable differential disadvantage in comparison to the CLS recipients. Their differential disadvantage lies in the Social Security Act which deems non-CLS scholarships as income. Students in receipt of a scholarship are liable to have their Centrelink benefits reduced as a result of the "additional income" from the University. This anomalous problem diminishes the real value of the USQ Equity Scholarships. We request that the sections of the Social Security Act which generate this problem be reviewed and abrogated so as to allow recipients of the equity scholarships to receive their full and proper entitlements from the Commonwealth through Centrelink.

H. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ESP FUNDING IN 2008

1. *Outreach programs*

The University undertakes a range of outreach programs to raise aspirations amongst communities to consider higher education. Due to USQ's regional location and close proximity to low socio-economic areas, many outreach activities target key equity groups as core audiences to the programs incidentally.

1.1 *Outreach to schools*

- **Annual Faculty of Business school based programs:** Toowoomba CPA/USQ Accounting Careers Days Years 11 & 12; Ipswich, Springfield, Toowoomba & Fraser Coast Legal Studies Teachers' Workshops; Toowoomba ICT Breakfast Year 12; Girls and Boys in ICT events Year 10; Toowoomba Trading Room Challenge Year 11; Business Student Experience Day Years 11 & 12
- **Headstart Program:** For the third year USQ has provided Year 11 and 12 students in all schools in the Darling Downs, Fraser Coast and Springfield areas the chance to take part in the Head Start Program. It offers students a selection of over 50 USQ courses and it is expected enrolments should reach about 200 during 2007. The courses are fee-free and students successfully completing receive credit for completion of the course towards their first year of study in USQ programs.
- **Indigenous Students Guide to USQ:** Careers & Employment section of Student Services has developed the Indigenous Family Guide to USQ. This booklet, modelled on The Family Guide to USQ, provides information that is specifically tailored to the needs of Indigenous Australians, particularly those who live in regional areas and have no exposure to higher education culture. The booklet contains messages of encouragement from senior Indigenous Australians who want to raise aspirations toward higher education.
- **School Partners Program:** A program designed to manage the relationship between USQ and high schools in its regions, the School Partners Program is now in its 3rd year and 40 schools in Fraser Coast and Springfield areas have signed up. These areas have a high level of disadvantage and low education participation rates. The Partner schools range from Isis District State High School, to Monto, Nanango and Gin Gin SHS, to Urangan SHS in Hervey Bay and Maryborough SHS in Maryborough. In the Springfield area they range from Beaudesert SHS to Redbank Plains SHS in Ipswich.

- **School Liaison Program:** involves regular visits to schools throughout south-east and south-west Queensland; as well as low socioeconomic status metropolitan areas. Visits include general information sessions on pathways to university, financial and other assistance to attend university, study options, careers, and support services.

(<http://www.usq.edu.au/futurestudents/teachers/school/default.htm>)

- **Special Schools Liaison:** occurs as a result of specific Faculty initiatives or responses to special needs. For example:

- Girls in IT: Together with Toowoomba State High School, USQ has taken the initiative to provide the opportunity to research a career in IT for girls. Each year USQ organises two events in collaboration with the Toowoomba High Schools to provide insight into pathways and careers in this field.

- Faculty of Education conduct a number of programs that increase the profile of USQ in rural & isolated areas, including the annual PCAP camp for Year 8 and 9 students from schools in rural and remote areas, Professional Experience Practicums at schools in rural and remote areas, Isolated Schools Project and Isolated Children's Project.

- **USQ Youth Leadership Day:** the Faculty of Education hosts a day for student leaders from rural and isolated regions in Queensland. This event was held at the Toowoomba and at the Fraser Coast campuses.

- **UniLIFE** ((Looking Into Further Education) **Program:** The students targeted for this program are in year 11 and may not believe that studying at University is an option for them due to their economic circumstance, distance from University (remote and rural), disability or other perceived barriers. Careers Employment & Equity section of Student Services, Fraser Coast staff and Marketing & PR have put together the program.

- **Voices on the Range:** has been hosted by USQ for the past four years. It is a youth cultural festival that attracts more than 1,500 Year 5 through to Year 12 students from schools across southern Queensland. The event provides opportunities for students to participate in a range of workshops and share the talents and enthusiasm of professional presenters in a variety of areas including writing for various genres, poetry performance, cartooning, theatre direction, film-making and voice.

- **Science outreach:** an initiative designed to provide year 12 students in the Fraser Coast region hands-on experience during workshops that orient them to the study of biology; an experience that is not available to them in their secondary education.

- **USQ's HERE** (Higher Education Rural Experience) **Program** offered children who would not ordinarily consider higher education as a post-school option due to location and financial disadvantage an opportunity to experience tertiary education.

- **Fraser Coast Year 10 and 11 Day** – students from high schools in Hervey Bay, Maryborough and Gympie attended on campus at Fraser Coast to experience University life and be oriented to the University community
- **Strengthening the Links** - co-ordinated by the Faculty of Education, this project continues to provide professional development opportunities for regional school teachers through provision of seminars throughout the academic year on a range of topics.
- **Faculty of Education Youth Leadership Program** - This highly successful initiative continues to provide opportunities for Year 12 student leaders from rural and isolated regions in Queensland to experience a day at the university where they explore principles and attributes of effective leadership and further develop their leadership skills.
- **Regional School's Workshop** - Bringing together 4 or 5 primary schools to workshop with the members of the USQ Ergon Energy Big Band. The afternoon was spent learning new pieces and skills with the USQ students 'playing in' with the junior players. The evening concert was a great success with a packed audience of over 350 excited parents, family and friends from around the region.

1.2 Outreach Programs Involving Careers Information, Advice & Options

- **A wide range of Expos, Forums, Information Days and Workshops:** are conducted which involve and engage school students and teachers. These include the Careers Expos, Student Experience Days, Youth Leadership Days, Taste of Science, Grade 11/12 Day, Future Options Day, Post School Options Expo for students with disabilities, A Dynamic Career for Boys/Girls, GIS & GPS Day, Day with USQ Music and QUE Fest Workshops.
(<http://www.usq.edu.au/futurestudents/teachers/school/events/default.htm>)
- **Advice to LBOTE Community:** is provided at USQ Fraser Coast career service, in particular to the Philippine Tagalog community, providing information on careers and access to higher education.
- **Community Career Education Seminars:** are provided by the Careers & Employment unit. These seminars entail the provision of a structured career education experience by career development practitioners. These free services are otherwise unavailable in the community and fill an important gap in the local area. Upon completion, participants are better informed about their career and the educational and training avenues through which they may advance.
- **Graduate Induction Program:** is a scheme through which regional employment opportunities are developed by the Careers & Employment unit in conjunction with the Faculty of Business. This innovative outreach program entails the university's career development professionals

consulting to small businesses in the region and assisting their development of graduate employment programs. This serves regional and rural students by opening up opportunities traditionally associated with corporations based in metropolitan centres and serves small businesses by providing additional resources which are otherwise the preserve of large corporations.

- **Guidance Officer Days:** provide professional development opportunities for Guidance Officers and brings their schools in closer contact with the higher education sector. Important information is provided in relation to equity services, such as administrative and admissions changes, fees, scholarships, academic program changes, initiatives for equity target groups. The 2007 days focused upon “The Resilient Guidance Officer; transforming the stresses and strains of daily living” and “Transition to University: Issues and Challenges” These days provide valuable information and tools for Guidance Officers and Career Counsellors from rural and geographically isolated areas and from low socioeconomic backgrounds and were attended by 80 professionals.

- **Rural Training – Youth Support Conference:** USQ sponsored this Rural Guidance Officer Conference which was held at USQ Fraser Coast and attended by 80 Guidance Officers.

- **USQ is Coming to Town – Woodenbong:** USQ visited the town of Woodenbong. Their Central School has a 35% Indigenous population and the Principal invited USQ to engage with the whole community on future tertiary study options. Staff members from the Careers & Employment section of Student Services, Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag Indigenous Higher Education Centre and Marketing & Public Relations ran 4 presentations/workshops, including one after hours and a visit to the Indigenous Mission.

- **Family Guide to USQ:** Student Services continues to publish a community education booklet, the Family Guide to USQ, which is free of charge. The Guide is directed at the parents of first-generation students. Its content ranges widely; and includes explaining the terminology of university; possible career outcomes for particular programs; the pragmatics of renting and paying for textbooks. This Guide complements other supportive information available on-line and in print.

- **Internet information:** The Careers & Employment service undertook a major review of its website and improved its format, to suit those with special needs, and to improve its content to focus upon major equity groups. The students’ and community version is available at <http://www.usq.edu.au/Studentservices/careers/careerdiv/default.htm>. The Service also recognises the important employment needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and also the needs of their potential employers. To address their information needs the Service created a specific set of web pages at <http://www.usq.edu.au/Studentservices/careers/equityemployer/default.htm>

[m](#). This is used to assist employers to consider graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- **Career Education Outreach for NESB students:** The Careers & Employment unit at the Springfield campus of USQ provided introductory career education to school children of Samoan heritage. The Samoan people of the western suburb region represent an important dimension of the cultural diversity of the area, but also require significant resources to move beyond economic and educational limitations. These introductory workshops exposed the children to the postschool career options that are possible through higher education. As an initial outreach activity, it is planned to be expanded in future years.
- **Career Education Outreach for Indigenous school children:** Student Services continues to collaborate with the Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag in providing a career education workshop to high school children who are brought to campus to discover university. In addition to this major activity, the Careers & Employment unit visited rural schools in Northern NSW and the South Burnett regions to speak with Indigenous school children, their families, and their teachers. This service contributed to their understanding of university being an alternative post-compulsory school option.

1.3 Outreach initiatives in Maths, Science and Technology

- **IT – A dynamic Career for Girls’ & Boys’:** In July each year the Faculty of Business ‘Information Systems’ Department holds a 2 day event for Year 10 students. Invitations are sent to all schools in Toowoomba and surrounding areas, including Warwick, Dalby, Oakey and Laidley. The students attend practical sessions relating to some area of IS, conducted by the IS lecturers and an information session on careers.
- **Science and Engineering Challenge:** jointly organised by the Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Engineering and Surveying, the Rotary Club of Toowoomba East and the Department of Main Roads. Approximately 1000 Yr 9 and 10 students from the region compete in a number of challenge tasks over 4 days. Winners from Regional Challenges compete at State and ultimately National level. This year USQ will act as host for the National Science and Engineering Challenge.
- **St Saviours visit:** Staff from Biological and Physical Sciences visit St Saviours School in Toowoomba to conduct a Day of Excellence with Year 9 students. This is designed to provide female students with activities to encourage their interest in Science.
- **National Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE) program:** The Faculty of Sciences is liaising with industry and schools to implement this strategy to attract young people into primary industry careers through science. Students attend workshops run by industry personnel and educators.

1.4 Outreach programs concerned with pathways and empowerment

- **Alternate pathway:** The Faculty of Business provides an alternate pathway for students who do not meet the minimum academic standard to

be enrolled in programs such as the Bachelor of Business, Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Information Technology.

- **Tertiary Taste Program:** operated in collaboration with the Southern Queensland Regional Disability Liaison Officer involves an on-campus program at USQ for secondary school students with disability who are considering higher education as a post-school option. Students from remote areas can be accommodated at the USQ Residential Colleges for the duration of the program. This program, which assists with post-school career options in higher education, was awarded a Queensland Disability Action Week Award in 2004. A comparable program is also operating from both the Fraser Coast and Springfield campuses. This outreach program also includes a career education module.
- **Encouraging diversity in USQ Nursing:** USQ has developed a DVD that encourages the participation of the people from diverse backgrounds into the profession of nursing, with particular emphasis on Indigenous Australians and males.
- **TAFE to University:** options are encouraged through a range of mechanisms. For example, USQ has promoted broad access to university through particular arrangements with VET institutions such as the clear pathways course developed between the Faculty of Business and Southern Queensland, Bremer Institute of TAFE (Springfield – Education City) and Wide Bay Institutes of TAFE. USQ also provides specific information on its 'Future Students' website for TAFE students and graduates (and their advisers) seeking advice on entering higher education (<http://www.usq.edu.au/futurestudents/tafe/default.htm>).

1.5 **Community outreach**

- **Creative Communities:** a Community of Practice program in the Faculty of Arts for lecturers who teach first year students was developed, aim being to share ideas about teaching and learning and to explore ideas of how to help students negotiate the challenges of the first year. Equity issues are a key consideration in many of the discussions. USQ Creative Communities is a program that formalises how Creative Arts can better manage its multiple arts-projects in order to more effectively enable arts practices in regional communities. Currently, USQ Creative Communities is managing a project entitled Cultural Catchments with the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee in the lower Balonne region of southwest Queensland: St George, Dirranbandi, and Surat. Other projects include Domestic Violence Workshop with the Chinchilla Family Support Centre and Yr 10 students at Chinchilla SHS.
- **On-campus activities celebrating major cultural events** such as Harmony Day and National Day of Healing (<http://www.usq.edu.au/multicultural/events/default.htm>)
- **University Community Open Days** are held annually in Toowoomba, Wide Bay and Springfield to inform and engage the community, and demystify the university environment and culture (<http://www.usq.edu.au/openday/default.htm>).
- **Disability Action Week (DAW)** is a community awareness program coordinated by the DAW Committee and supported by Disability Services

Queensland. Events are held across Queensland during Disability Action Week to celebrate diversity and the contributions of people with a disability to our community and to create supportive, inclusive communities.

- **Community partnerships** – The University is committed to regional engagement and meaningful partnerships have been developed with a range of Government and non-profit organisations in order to support educational pathways such as with Toowoomba Flexi School and The Smith Family.
- **Computers for Indigenous communities** – a program has been established between the Division of Information and Communication Technology and Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag Higher Education Centre to encourage Indigenous people to develop the skills required to fix and install computers. For each student who completes this course, a computer will be donated to an Indigenous community.
- **Indigenous and Sudanese Youth Program** – aimed to promote cultural harmony between Toowoomba's Sudanese and Indigenous communities incorporating basketball, volleyball, BBQ, and entertainment.
- **Moving Forward Together Forum** - Staff from Buallum Jarl-Bah played an important role in the Indigenous Careers Day, NAIDOC week and continued to liaise with community members through their Community Education Advisory Committee. The forum allowed community members to discuss pathways for success and highlighted the need for education.
- **Fraser Coast orientation** - as an addition to normal orientation activities parents, friends, siblings and general support network of our students were invited to a BBQ hosted by the Student Guild. This was well supported by 90 attendants who listened to husbands, wives, mothers etc of previous students tell how they helped the "student in the house" to succeed.

2. Support services

2.1 Specialised support for disadvantaged students

In addition to the strategies and measures outlined in section's B, E, F, and outreach initiatives outlined above, USQ provides the following specialised services for disadvantaged students:

- **AWARE (Academic Warning and Reflection Exercise)** - a process designed to assist students who have failed, have unsatisfactory academic standing or been asked to 'show cause'. Students who are in any of these categories or who are not performing as they might have hoped are encouraged to work through the AWARE process. This process can be undertaken online or with a student support officer. The outcome is a "personalised study action plan" that the student can follow to improve their academic performance. More information about the AWARE process, including the questionnaire, can be accessed at <http://www.usq.edu.au/aware/>
- **Adjunct childcare service** – a program to support the educational choices of students who are parents. This service enables the student to leave their child in short-term professional care for the duration of a lecture or research time in the library.

- **ALS online** – online information and resources on orienting to University, study skills, communication & maths skills, and assessment information (<http://www.usq.edu.au/ltsu/alsonline/default.htm>).
- **Communication for Academic Purposes (CAP) Program** - 50 hour online non-award course for students whose first language is not English or who are uncertain about starting university (<http://www.usq.edu.au/ltsu/courses/default.htm>).
- **Disability Resources** – support service for students with disabilities that is increasingly placing effort upon educating and informing the USQ community about the needs of students with disability including providing a Resource Guide for Academics and the provision of Disability Support Workers for students who require assistance with their learning (<http://www.usq.edu.au/studentervices/disabilityresources/default.htm>).
- **'Future Students' Homepage** is accessed directly from the USQ homepage by prospective students surfing for information on pathways, access, scholarships, course fees, study options, support and university life. Information is grouped for mature students, school students, TAFE students, and teachers and career advisors.
- **General Studies Program** – a graded multi-award study option for students (<http://www.usq.edu.au/handbook/current/contentgenstudies.html>).
- **Indigenous Employment** - The Careers & Employment unit commenced operation of the National Indigenous Cadetship Program in a partnership with DEWR, to improve the graduate employment outcomes of Indigenous students.
- **Indigenous Higher Education Support Centres** – Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag (<http://www.usq.edu.au/kumbari/default.htm>) and Buallum Jarl-Bah (<http://www.usq.edu.au/widebay/facdept/buallumjarlbah/default.htm>).
- **Indigenous postgraduate room support** – USQ has established an identified room for Indigenous postgraduate students that assists with social support and supplies necessary study materials.
- **Learner-Centred Tutorials** – cultural needs-based tutorials being trialled in first year courses; creating an inclusive learner-centred environment, aimed at increasing retention rates; addressing cultural needs of at-risk equity groups.
- **Library services** – support for students who are in rural or remote locations such as Express Post services for loans, extended borrowing times, free scanning and photocopying services. Also support for students with disability including an Assistive Technology Room and access to Braille resources (materials and texts) for students (<http://www.usq.edu.au/library/infofor/offcamp/default.htm>).
- **Males in Nursing Support Group** – allows male students enrolled in this non-traditional area of study and support one another while attempting to reverse the attitudes towards this profession for males.
- **Multicultural & Multilingual Student Association** – student support group for students whose first language is not English and are Australian citizens and permanent residents – an opportunity to share cultures and ideas, ask

questions, gather for social and development events, feed into the University (<http://www.usq.edu.au/multicultural/supports/mmsa/default.htm>).

- **Orientation Website** - available for students new to the University who are unable to attend the on-campus orientation activities or the regional orientation meetings held throughout Eastern Australia at the beginning of semester 1 and semester 2 due to location or other personal circumstance. The website provides students with information on getting ready for USQ, starting at USQ, getting support and USQ terminology. Total page visits for the month of February which leads up to the start of Semester 1 were 10780. An Orientation Website Steering Committee is responsible for developing and maintaining the website to ensure it meets the needs of all students (<http://www.usq.edu.au/orientation/default.htm>).
- **Outreach Services** – point of contact and network of support (Regional Liaison Officer Network) that supports external students including the establishment of a free call number to the USQ Switchboard for all distance students (<http://www.usq.edu.au/dec/outreach/default.htm>).
- **Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy (PALS)** - (<http://www.usq.edu.au/tsu/coursesupp/pals/default.htm>).
- **Refugee Support** – resulting from an increase in the number of enrolments in the Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP) by the large and growing Sudanese community on the Darling Downs to enter higher education, a designated tutor has been allocated to manage the special needs of this group as well as the establishment of a course discussion group and peer network primarily for their use, and the provision of information sessions for local schools is occurring. Additionally, USQ provides free-of-charge a dictionary to all Sudanese students who enrol in our enabling program to assist their language development which is often a barrier to their successful participation in higher education.
- **Register of Languages** – USQ maintains a register of staff who speak a language other than English for the support of students or peer staff.
- **Residential Colleges** – supporting the access of students from rural and isolated areas as well as two purpose-built accommodation units for wheelchair access. The Colleges also undertake an academic support role appointing student mentors in each discipline, reviewing academic progress and meeting with students when results could improve, and hosting academic workshops (<http://www.usq.edu.au/accommodation/>).
- **Tertiary Preparation (Enabling) Program (TPP)** - includes a significant **Correctional Services Program** that supports students into, and prepares students for, tertiary study (<http://www.usq.edu.au/tsu/tpp/default.htm>).
- **Textbooks for undergraduate Indigenous nurses** – USQ has a supply of nursing texts to support its Indigenous Australian students. Nursing texts tend to be a financial burden for most students as a result of their high costs.
- **USQ Women's Network Inc.** - encourages leadership and development in women at USQ, values, acknowledges and promotes women's achievements and contributions, reinforces equal opportunity initiatives, provides mentoring and personal and career development opportunities. The Constitution has

been recently reviewed to incorporate student membership. The Network has an allocated room in order to support its activities (<http://www.usq.edu.au/women/default.htm>).

- **Women's Career Development and Higher Education** - initial meetings were held with the Qld Office of Women to establish dialogue around the concept of developing a career education service for women who would not have considered university education as an option because of tradition or resources.
- **Services to women** – the establishment of an adjunct child care service, a new breastfeeding policy, parental support group, and broadening of the membership of USQ Women's Network to students.
- **USQMUM (Unearthing Student Quality: Men Mentoring Men)** - aims to reduce male student attrition in pre-service teacher education programs using a mentoring model, where male teachers from local schools participate in a one day professional development 'mentor training' program and then serve as Mentors for a number of first and second year education students. To date the program involves male teachers from four local primary schools and approximately twenty first and second year students in the Bachelor of Education (Primary/Middle School) program. The project will undergo review and evaluation in November 2007.

2.2 Use of mainstream support

All of the support services at USQ provide services with the recognition that a large proportion of our student body belong to one or more disadvantaged groups and as such provide services to meet the diverse needs of the student population.

Disadvantaged students at USQ, given their high proportion at USQ, are therefore heavy users of the mainstream support services offered by the University. These services are outlined below:

- **Beyond Education Project** – a project which is examining, among other issues, the skills necessary for the effective transition of graduates to the workforce and also whether Universities are effectively meeting corporate/business needs at both the undergraduate and postgraduate areas. It includes three main support services for students that aims to prepare them for graduate employment – (1) Employability Workshops; (2) Career Mentoring Network; (3) Graduate Induction initiative.
- **Customer Relationship Management Centre** – develops relationship with prospective students, provider of information
- **Information Technology Services (ITS)**
(<http://www.usq.edu.au/its/default.htm>)
- **Inter-faculty Challenges at Springfield campus** – strategy to assist with student retention held during Orientation Week building a strong sense of community and build upon essential employability skills such as team work, communication and planning as well as strengthening ties amongst peers and faculty, creating an engaging environment. The Springfield campus has attracted a high proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds who have no family history of tertiary study. Therefore, providing opportunities for student engagement is essential to make these first generation university students feel welcome.

- **Student Services** – provision of services relating to accommodation, employment, counselling, career development, financial assistance, study skills, health, and graduate options with a clear consideration and emphasis of provision of services towards equity groups (<http://www.usq.edu.au/student-services/>).
- **USQ Fraser Coast Campus** – a branch campus in a region with a high proportion of disadvantaged people as a result of low socioeconomic status, unemployment, traditionally low education rates, and increasing proportion of South Sea Islander people (<http://www.usq.edu.au/frasercoast/default.htm>).
- **USQ Springfield Campus** – a branch campus in a pocket of west Brisbane that has high levels of disadvantage as a result of financial hardship and strong non-English speaking background communities (<http://www.usq.edu.au/springfield/default.htm>).
- **Learning & Teaching Support Unit's Academic Learning Support** (<http://www.usq.edu.au/ltsu/default.htm>)
- **Learning Skills Program** - a series of learning skills workshops are offered as part of the "Managing Your Study" program to be run during the first eight weeks of each semester.
- **Library** (<http://www.usq.edu.au/library/>)
- **Outreach Services / Regional Liaison Officer Network (in the Distance and e-Learning Centre, DeC)** (<http://www.usq.edu.au/dec/sections/outreach/default.htm>)
- **Student Administration** (<http://www.usq.edu.au/student-admin/default.htm>)
- **Student Guild** (<http://www.studentguild.com.au/>)
- **Student Services** (<http://www.usq.edu.au/student-services/default.htm>)
- **the five USQ Faculties** (<http://www.usq.edu.au/facdept/default.htm>)
- **Equal Opportunity Online:** an online training program for staff covering the areas of equal opportunity, discrimination and harassment. Equity principles, terminology and application are explained through real life case studies and interactive learning techniques. This is used as a professional development activity for staff at USQ.
- **Orientation Event** - During semester 1 2007, the Faculty of Business extended the orientation to across 10 weeks. The orientation sessions were to gauge valued feedback from students in terms of, how our program provided during 'O' week met their needs. The information collated through a survey will be used to assist with the future development of the program. Having the orientation spread across 10 weeks enables information to be provided at a more relevant time throughout the semester. The Faculty implemented a number of social / community engagement aspects across the 10 weeks and the 'follow-up' sessions to assist students with their transition to University studies as well as to the Faculty and its respective School's and Disciplines of Studies. This similar orientation event will be continued in semester 2, 2007.
- **Institutional Awareness:** Enhancing the link between career development and equity - the Careers & Employment unit participated in the management of the annual national conference of the National Association of Graduate

Careers Advisory Service in 2006. The theme of the conference pertained to equity, diversity and access in graduate outcomes. The unit was instrumental in supporting the theme's development because of the strong working alliance it held with the USQ Student Equity Office. The Careers & Employment unit has also engaged in the process of modifying staff skill profile and service delivery through amendment of position descriptions to include a specific focus on disadvantaged students.

- **Appointment of Co-ordinator Student Hub** - on a 0.4 basis at Fraser Coast campus to oversee the student support services which include Buallum Jarl-Bah, Student Services, Academic Learning Support additional input into ICT, Library and Administrative services which affect students.

3. Commonwealth Learning Scholarships

Institutions do not need to provide information for this criterion.

4. Institutional equity scholarships

Scholarship	Financial value	Duration	Target group	Number of students assisted per year
USQ Equity Scholarships	\$3,000 or DELL laptop (valued \$1,500) or \$750 book bursary	\$2,000 in commencing year, \$1,000 in second year; laptop or bursary one-off	Members of equity groups suffering financial hardship	75
Rural Residential Scholarship	~\$3,500 per year (50% of residential fees)	For duration of undergraduate degree	Students from rural or remote areas who would find it difficult to study on campus for financial reasons	6
Women in Engineering or Surveying Scholarship	\$4,000 per year	First year and second year	Female students in Engineering or Surveying	1
Indigenous Student Scholarship	\$2,000 per year	Duration of full-time course	Indigenous students	3
Year 12 Student Scholarships	\$2,000 per year	Duration of full-time course	Students suffering financial hardship	18

Non-school Leaver Scholarships	\$2,000 per year	Duration of full-time course	Students suffering financial hardship	18
Distance Education Study Support Scholarships	\$1,000	One year payment	Members of equity groups studying via distance education	16
Regional Scholarships	1 x \$6,000 per year 8 x \$3,000 per year	Maximum of 3 years	Local region students	9
Peter Rorke Music Scholarship	\$1,000	1 year	Music student whose financial circumstances could be an impediment to continuing study	1
Faculty of Engineering & Surveying Indigenous Student Scholarship	\$4,000	2 years	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1
Faculty of Education – Continuing Students Scholarship	\$2,500	Over 5 semesters	Students suffering financial hardship or from rural/remote areas	2
Faculty of Education – School leaver	\$2,500	Over 5 semesters	Students suffering financial hardship or from rural/remote areas	
Faculty of Education – Mature-age students Scholarship	\$2,500	Over 5 semesters	Students suffering financial hardship or from rural/remote areas	1

Information on USQ's full range of scholarships programs can be accessed at:
<http://www.usq.edu.au/scholarships/>

UNIVERSITY CONTACT OFFICERS

	Name & Title	Phone	Email
ESP Contact Officer	Christie White, Manager Student Equity	(07) 4631 2374	whitech@usq.edu.au
DSP Contact Officer	Christie White, Manager Student Equity	(07) 4631 2374	whitech@usq.edu.au
CLS Contact Officer	Christie White, Manager Student Equity	(07) 4631 2374	whitech@usq.edu.au