USQ Social Justice Strategic Plan
2017–2020
We acknowledge and honour the Giabal and Jarowair peoples of Toowoomba; the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul peoples of Springfield and Ipswich; the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, Sydney; and the Kambuwal peoples of Stanthorpe as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways where the University of Southern Queensland is located.

Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and future. We celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Australians and acknowledge the important role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian society.

The University respects and acknowledges our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders and visitors who come from many nations across Australia.
Introduction

Globally, the University of Southern Queensland’s (USQ) Social Justice Strategic Plan (SJSP) is a unique institutional identifier that demonstrates an ongoing social commitment to improving organisational behaviours for the benefit of the University’s students, staff and communities. The 2017–2020 SJSP builds on the significant reforms and achievements of the 2014–2015 plan, directed at addressing structural and systemic barriers to education and employment, while taking account of anticipated future demands on the higher education sector.

The processes and procedures put forth in the Plan articulate the purposeful and demonstrable actions of respect and integrity, which are central to the achievement of excellence; USQ’s core cultural values. The Plan promotes the positive conditions in which to develop and maintain productive relationships including: knowledge and information sharing; staff, student and community voice; participatory dialogue; and informed decision making. These conditions in turn support the achievement of the goals and objectives set out in the University’s Strategic Plan 2016–2020.

To promote the transformative potential of higher education and research, the 2017–2020 SJSP broadly adopts a capability approach to set the conditions for all students and staff, regardless of their background, to achieve individually valued outcomes.

Through a capability lens, social justice in higher education can be advanced by promoting individual agency, and by the removal of barriers to people’s freedom to choose (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

To put into place processes and interventions that may overcome disadvantage and facilitate success, the 2017–2020 SJSP complements the redistributive work achieved through the 2014–2015 SJSP to increase equity, participation, and opportunities in higher education, with principles of social justice that recognise diversity, personal values, and the complexities of student and staff lives (Gale & Molla, 2015).

STATEMENT 2017–2020

An equitable and fair USQ is achieved through positive recognition of difference and enhanced participation. These are the principles that drive the achievement of excellence as a socially just higher education enterprise. By embracing these principles we commit to both meeting, and exceeding our social responsibilities to students, staff and our communities.

HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

This document provides an overview of the SJSP that is further detailed in the 2017–2020 Implementation and Evaluation plan. The SJSP provides a framework for action aligned to the cornerstones of the USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020: Education, Research and Enterprise.

The framework sets out 11 goals aligned to each pillar, and accompanying processes and procedures that have been guided by 5 interconnected and co-dependent principles of social justice: equity, self-determination, rights, access, and participation (Nelson & Creagh, 2013). Each principle contributes processes and procedures towards realisation of a goal and its intended objective and performance outcome.

The framework was developed through a synthesis of melded goals, objectives and action set out in the Strategic Plan 2017-2020, the SJSP 2014–2015, and stakeholder identified opportunities for improvement. Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide a summary of the Social Justice Strategic Plan 2017-2020.
**PRINCIPLES**

**ENSURE EQUITY**

The principle of equity is applied with the intention of counteracting or removing potential institutional barriers that impede participation for students and staff. This requires all staff to be attuned to what constitutes ‘difference’ in order to design or embed policies, practices and actions that eliminate barriers. It is important to note that equity does not mean equality. Whilst equality refers to the equal distribution of resources, equity refers to the provision of resources to certain groups to enable them to access, participate, and succeed. This distinction shifts attention from equal treatment to the resolution of “systemic and historical forms of exclusion” (Patton, Shahjahan, & Osei-Kofi, 2010 p.270).

**STRENGTHENING ACCESS**

The fourth principle is aimed at enabling equitable access to USQ’s social, cultural, and economic resources. This requires development of processes and procedures that are broadly inclusive of the diverse needs of USQ’s communities, and lead to enhanced structures, practices and outcomes.

**ADVANCE PARTICIPATION**

The fifth principle, widens participation through structures and procedures that are not contingent on a staff or student’s individual background or life circumstances. Importantly, this principle is aimed at connecting staff and students to the work of the University by developing ‘space’ for multiple knowledges, values and understandings (Gale & Tranter, 2011).

**FACILITATE SELF-DETERMINATION**

The second principle is applied with the objective of supporting or setting the conditions for self-determination (Gale, 2000). In other words, how students and staff are able to engage with the University in ways that allow them to exercise agency of their learning, development and career progression.

**SAFEGUARDING OR ENHANCING RIGHTS**

The third principle brings attention to the fairness of USQ processes and procedures and the organisation’s responsibilities to its students, staff, research partners and communities.

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**TABLE 1 – EDUCATION PILLAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Processes and procedures</th>
<th>Performance outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. A culturally supportive learning space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</strong></td>
<td>Integrated and communicating student support systems from across the University to provide a holistic and coordinated service model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</td>
<td>Embed, effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander equity programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. An inclusive learning environment that facilitates higher education attainment</strong></td>
<td>Enhanced support of student representation frameworks to progress and realise student identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues</td>
<td>Continued strengthening and extension of communities of practice between Schools and Indigenous staff to ensure meaningful inclusion of culture into curriculums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. A socially responsible university that provides opportunity for social mobility</strong></td>
<td>Embedded effective equity programs that decode and demystify university processes and practices</td>
<td>Student measurement tools utilised to inform organisational learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Graduates whose abilities have been developed through opportunities provided by USQ</strong></td>
<td>Supported development of learning that engages with social, cultural and learning differences by promoting cross-unit, educative and collaborative processes</td>
<td>Enhanced student feedback processes in relation to pedagogical and service models, on decisions impacting them, and on USQ performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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EDUCATION: ENHANCING STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT

**Table 1 – Education pillar**

This table outlines the processes and procedures associated with each goal, along with the performance outcomes aimed for. The first goal focuses on providing a culturally supportive learning space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, ensuring that their needs are met within the broader University environment. The second goal aims to create an inclusive learning environment that facilitates higher education attainment for all students, focusing on equitable representation and participation. The third goal emphasizes the importance of a socially responsible university that provides opportunities for social mobility, ensuring that diverse student needs are recognized and supported. The fourth goal highlights the development of students’ abilities through opportunities provided by USQ, aiming to enhance their educational experiences and career prospects.
### TABLE 2 – RESEARCH PILLAR

**RESEARCH: GENERATING A RESEARCH CULTURE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure equity</td>
<td>Facilitate self-determination</td>
<td>Safeguard or enhance rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Socially responsible research that makes a difference to communities</td>
<td>USQ research projects achieve outcomes that lead to equitable benefits for communities</td>
<td>Enhanced research through collaborative partnerships with like-minded organisations and the general public that have benefit to local and global society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. HDR students whose abilities have been developed through opportunities provided by USQ</td>
<td>A decoded and demystified pipeline from undergraduate to HDR study</td>
<td>Facilitated research partnerships between HDR students and business or community organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A culturally supportive learning and research space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students</td>
<td>A decoded and demystified pipeline from undergraduate to HDR study</td>
<td>Facilitated research partnerships between HDR students and business or community organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitated research partnerships between HDR students and business or community organisations</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student self-identified research subject matter and methodologies is encouraged and supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships and collaboration between C/SER, disciplines and the Research Division to establish pathways and pipelines to HDR study</td>
<td>Strengthened partnerships between HDR students and business or community organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3 – ENTERPRISE PILLAR

**ENTERPRISE: SUPPORTING USQ’S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure equity</td>
<td>Facilitate self-determination</td>
<td>Safeguard or enhance rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. An inclusive workplace culture</td>
<td>All policies, procedures and practices are equitable and inclusive</td>
<td>Staff are involved in the design of strategies to improve working environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A culturally supportive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees</td>
<td>Embedded critical reflection on workplace procedures, practices and expectations that may pose barriers to participation</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are involved in the continuous improvement of workplace procedures, practices, and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. A university where all employees are agents of social change</td>
<td>Policies, plans and procedures include analysis of equity and inclusion impacts</td>
<td>Communication of social justice activity “feed up” and “feed across” the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff capacity to engage with accountability processes</td>
<td>Staff are appraised of organisational expectations concerning University teaching, research, and service goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. All staff whose capabilities have been developed through opportunities provided by USQ</td>
<td>Opportunities to discuss the management of teaching, service and research goals of USQ</td>
<td>Participatory opportunities for staff to discuss self-determined career goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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ALeignmeNT TO USQ STRATEGIC PLAN 2016–2020

SSI-1: Student assessment of quality of educational experience at or above the university sector mean
SSI-2: Overall graduate satisfaction at or above the university sector mean
SSI-3: Consistent ranking in the top five for the sector in the proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds in the student body

SSI-4: 10 per cent annual increase in total HERDC reportable research income (Cat 1-4)
SSI-5: Five per cent annual increase in average publication quality (defined as increase in the percentage of quality that comprise our total journal publication)
SSI-6: 10 per cent annual increase in income from industry and international partnerships and collaborations
SSI-7: Council approved financial targets for the University are consistently met or exceeded
SSI-8: Identified workplace diversity target for the University are met or exceeded
SSI-9: Employee engagement levels are at or above the university sector mean
SSI-10: One to two per cent reduction of carbon emissions against the 2015 baseline

SJSI-1: Broaden higher education attainment and social impact that makes a difference to communities
SJSI-2: Manage our physical and digital infrastructure and systems for a successful and sustainable enterprise
SJSI-3: Build our reputation for research training that produces innovators and entrepreneurs
SJSI-4: Enhance our national and international standing for high quality research that makes a difference to communities
SJSI-5: Socially responsible research that makes a difference to communities
SJSI-6: Build our reputation for research training that produces innovators and entrepreneurs
SJSI-7: Manage our physical and digital infrastructure and systems for a successful and sustainable enterprise
SJSI-8: Enhance our global standing as a source of graduates who excel in the workplace and develop as leaders
SJSI-9: Continue to be an employer of choice
SJSI-10: Be an employer of choice
SJSI-11: A university workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students

Supporting Plans:

REFERENCES