UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

USQ Annual Report
2020

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Letter to the Minister

26 February 2021

The Honourable Grace Grace MP
Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing
Department of Education
PO Box 15033
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Minister Grace

I am pleased to present the Annual Report 2020 and financial statements for the University of Southern Queensland.

I certify that this Annual Report complies with:

- prescribed requirements of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* (Qld) and the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019* (Qld); and
- detailed requirements set out in the *Annual Report Requirements for Queensland Government Agencies*.

A checklist outlining the annual reporting requirements can be found on page 116 of this Annual Report or accessed at www.usq.edu.au/about-usq/governance-leadership/plans-reports

Yours sincerely

Mr John Dornbusch
Chancellor, USQ

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Introduction

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) Annual Report provides a review of the University's activities and performance in 2020 and identifies future priorities. The *Report* aims to ensure the University meets its statutory requirements for transparency in public reporting and remains openly accountable to its many stakeholders.

In describing the achievements, performance, outlook and financial position of the University in terms of the objectives of the *USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020*, the Report also serves to inform continuous improvement in organisational performance.

The *Report* reflects USQ's status as a values-driven organisation committed to:

- providing opportunities for access with success to higher education by a diverse student constituency
- supporting the Queensland and Australian economies through graduates who are highly regarded as job-ready, career-empowered, innovative and connected professionals
- maintaining a program of responsible internationalisation for the mutual benefit of students, our local regions and the source countries of our international student body
- conducting world-class research in select areas that impacts on communities
- serving as a partner of choice to business and community through best-practice management.

In 2020, the University consolidated its position in supporting regional development and sustainability through focused research and accessible higher education, while continuing its program of necessary reforms to position the University for success in a highly dynamic and challenging operating environment, particularly those brought about by the challenges relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Intended readers and users of the *Report* include current staff and students, members of State Parliament, research and other partners of the University, employers and graduates, media professionals, and interested members of the public.

Glossary of Terms

For a complete list of USQ terms, please refer to the Definitions Dictionary in the USQ Policy and Procedure Library at https://policy.usq.edu.au/.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM: An approved Higher Education Award of the University, consisting of a combination of courses, the successful completion of an offering of which, together with any credit transfers and exemptions in accordance with the relevant requirements, will fulfil the prescribed requirements for that particular Award.

BLENDED DELIVERY: Combines different technologies, in particular a combination of traditional (e.g. face-to-face instruction) and online teaching approaches and media.

COURSE: The basic unit of study and assessment for which a student may be awarded a grade, and may accumulate credit units towards completion of a Program.

ENABLING PROGRAM: A program for disadvantaged students which meets Commonwealth guidelines for such programs and from which successful completion leads to automatic admission into an Academic Program of the University.

ON-CAMPUS: Represents courses, the offer of which involves attendance at the University on a regular basis.

ONLINE: Represents courses in which the instruction, communication among academic staff and students, submission of assignments and feedback is offered mainly through the internet.

VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: An encompassing term for the Learning Management System incorporating USQStudyDesk, USQStaffDesk, and USQOpenDesk and their associated systems.

Chancellor's Report

I am pleased to report that 2020 has been another strong year for the University of Southern Queensland (USQ), despite the significant challenges to our operating environment brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Twelve months ago, none of us could have anticipated what would unfold across the world during 2020. Fortunately for USQ, we have always had a flexible approach to learning and teaching, with many of our students studying online by choice, which meant that the disruption to their studies caused by the pandemic was not as significant as it might otherwise have been. When the potential extent of the impact of the pandemic became apparent, USQ rallied as a community to ensure that the educational needs of all our students could continue to be met, with our staff quickly ensuring that all learning materials which would normally be provided face-to-face were made available online, as well as rapidly moving to online examinations across all our degrees.

However, other aspects of our students' lives were impacted by the pandemic, with many losing their incomes as they were dependent upon part-time and casual jobs in sectors such as retail and hospitality to support themselves and their families. The University immediately moved to provide practical financial support to all of our students in need and over the course of 2020, we provided in excess of $2.3 million in funding to assist our students with financial support for the payment of essentials such as rent, utilities and food, as well as providing 200 computers to those students who would have normally used our on-campus computer laboratories.

It took teamwork and dedication from our executive leaders, our academic staff and our professional staff, the vast majority of whom were working from their own homes, to ensure that our students had the best opportunity possible in incredibly trying circumstances to continue confidently with their studies. As a result, student numbers remained steady and our students told us they were grateful for all of the support and understanding they received from USQ.

Like all universities across Australia and the world, our graduation ceremonies are our most significant events. In 2020, our graduations also moved online, with 5186 graduates having their awards conferred in absentia. Council also awarded special University honours to the following:

- Dr Jan Boys, Doctor of the University (honoris causa)
- Dr Clive Berghofer AM, Doctor of Business (honoris causa)
- Dr Sharon Boyce, Doctor of Letters (honoris causa)
- Fellow of the University - Mrs Jane Farmer, Mr Rohan Gosstray, Mrs Lea Rappoport, Mrs Barbara Thelander, Mr Derek Tuffield OAM.

One of the key tasks of Council during 2020 was considering the *Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy*, which was approved on 14 December and may be accessed via the University's online Policy Library - https://policy.usq.edu.au/documents/2070PL . This Policy is consistent with the principles of the Model Code recommended by the Hon Robert French AC in his 2019 *Review of Freedom of Speech in Australian Higher Education Providers*. The Policy, which applies to all staff, students and decision-making bodies will be deployed in 2021, with the development of related procedures being undertaken by a designated project officer under the leadership of the Chair of Academic Board. A working group will also be established to lead the communication and education aspects of the implementation of the Policy.

In closing, I wish to express my gratitude to all members of Council for their contribution to USQ over the past year in very trying circumstances. And in turn, Council offers its acknowledgement of the remarkable engagement and effort of the University executive and staff for maintaining the highest quality in learning, teaching and research throughout the past year, despite the impact of COVID-19.

As Chancellor, I could not be prouder of what the University of Southern Queensland achieved in 2020, and look forward to continued growth and development of this fine University in 2021.

Mr John Dornbusch
Chancellor, USQ

Vice-Chancellor's Report

The course of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 saw the University refocusing our efforts to find and leverage opportunity in crisis. With significantly fewer international students than many other universities and a well-established online offering of our programs, the impact for USQ was minimised. Reaffirming our commitment to place-based strategies, the University focused on building organisational resilience and looking to the future, retaining the best of our rapid-change COVID-19 responses, particularly in learning and teaching.

Due to the fact that all but a few of our degree programs were already available in online mode, we achieved a rapid transition for all students to wholly online learning, teaching and support practices necessitated by the pandemic, enacting a range of adjustments to learning and teaching practice and policy and assessment activities. The University's ability to respond to the immediate needs for community upskilling or reskilling in an economic recession was also demonstrated via the offering of 20 six-month online undergraduate and postgraduate certificate programs developed in response to the Federal Government's COVID-19 Higher Education Relief Package, and through the offering of five free UpSkill online microcredentialling courses to support our community. The University also established a COVID-19 Student Support Package with more than $2.35 million in funding and approximately 200 laptops provided to support 1480 of our students impacted by the pandemic.

Because of our established expertise in online teaching delivery, the impact of the pandemic on our international student numbers in 2020 was minimal. However, in an endeavour to continue our efforts in international marketing and recruitment, our staff moved quickly to digital modes of engagement, as well as additional in-country operations in Latin America, Southeast Asia and South Asia. Throughout the year we renewed our focus on strengthening our international partnerships portfolio by reviewing existing partnerships, establishing new relationships with highly-regarded international institutions, and improving partnership management policies and procedures.

Despite the impacts of the pandemic, the University achieved a number of its key goals for the year, including the establishment of an Academic Quality Unit in August. The unit is designed to support a whole-of-institution approach to managing the quality of academic programs, and student learning experiences, through the development and implementation of supporting frameworks, systems and processes, and associated evaluation and reporting.

The Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) Graduate Outcomes Survey report released in November 2020, showed that USQ graduates have the highest median full-time salary ($70,700) in Australia. It also showed that the University of Southern Queensland was one of only three universities in Australia to increase its undergraduate full-time employment rate; from 76.1% in 2019 to 78.9% in 2020, a rise of 2.8%. The data also showed that the University of Southern Queensland has the fourth highest full-time employment rate in Australia for graduates, with 78.9% of graduates being in full-time work within four months of graduating.

2020 saw continued success in research, including participation in two Australian Research Council (ARC) Industrial Transformation Research Hubs worth $5 million each; success in Round 12 of the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund receiving almost $1 million to enhance climate change adaptation processes; and sharing in $47 million from the Australian Government to lead threatened and invasive species research on farm through the National Environmental Science Program (NESP).

Given the many challenges faced by the University during 2020, we can be proud of our collective achievements, and we look forward with hope for a return to a less tumultuous external operating environment in 2021.

Professor Geraldine Mackenzie
Vice-Chancellor, USQ

Overview: The University of Southern Queensland

Functions

USQ is a body corporate established pursuant to the provisions of the *University of Southern Queensland Act 1998* (the USQ Act). The latest version of the *USQ Act* came into effect from 1 August 2018.

USQ's functions under Section 5 of the *USQ Act* are:

- to provide education at university standard;
- to provide facilities for, and encourage, study and research;
- to encourage the advancement and development of knowledge, and its application to government, industry, commerce and the community;
- to provide courses of study or instruction (at the levels of achievement the Council considers appropriate) to meet the needs of the community;
- to confer higher education awards;
- to disseminate knowledge and promote scholarship;
- to provide facilities and resources for the wellbeing of the University's staff, students and other persons undertaking courses at the University;
- to exploit commercially, for the University's benefit, a facility or resource of the University, including, for example, study, research or knowledge, or the practical application of study, research or knowledge, belonging to the University, whether alone or with someone else; and
- to perform other functions given to the University under the *USQ Act* or another Act.

In line with the functions as stated in the *USQ Act*, The University defines its purpose as *leading in economic and social development through higher education and research excellence*.

Organisational values

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) fosters a values-driven culture – one that is built around relationships and community; mutual respect; diversity and inclusion; and a strong commitment to ethical behaviours and integrity, collaboration, creativity and innovation. The organisational values are Respect, Integrity and Excellence.

The philosophy underlying USQ's business and operational model also naturally reflects the five Queensland Public Service Values (**https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/our-values**)

Customers first:

- Student success and attainment are central to our learning and teaching.
- Mutually beneficial partnerships are core to our research and engagement.
- Internal customer focus informs our service culture.

Ideas into action:

- 'Challenging the norm and suggesting solutions', 'encouraging and embracing new ideas' and 'working across boundaries' are all central to the operations of a university.

Unleash potential and empower people:

- USQ prides itself as a university that supports the broadening of university attainment, has a positive impact on society, and builds a high-performing and productive workforce.

Be courageous:

- USQ is an organisation that takes responsibility for its actions, learns from both its successes and mistakes, takes calculated risks within approved frameworks, and acts with transparency.

Operating environment

The operating environment for Australian universities continued to be extremely challenging through 2020, both as a result of continued constraints on government funding and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on the University's operations, notably on international student load, particularly for on shore students. Whilst an increase in Commonwealth supported student load was experienced through the pandemic, ongoing uncertainty around international border closures will require continued monitoring into 2021. Additionally, in 2020 non-teaching activities such as residential colleges, external printing services and other on campus hospitality and retail functions experienced significant disruption due to the impacts of the preventative response to COVID-19.

The cessation of demand-driven funding from 2018, which imposed a funding freeze on bachelor-degree spending, continued to impact in 2020. This resulted in a further real decline in Commonwealth revenue however, the implementation of the COVID-19 relief measures by the Government resulted in additional Commonwealth revenue being received to support the University through the pandemic.

From 2021, the Job-ready Graduates (JRG) package will be implemented. As a result, the University is facing a significant growth imperative with respect to student load and income across the medium term to help ensure smoother performance as transition funding offered as part of JRG is withdrawn at the end of 2023. These implications heighten the need to deliver sustained load growth and address aspects of the University's cost base in a more structured way.

Strategic direction

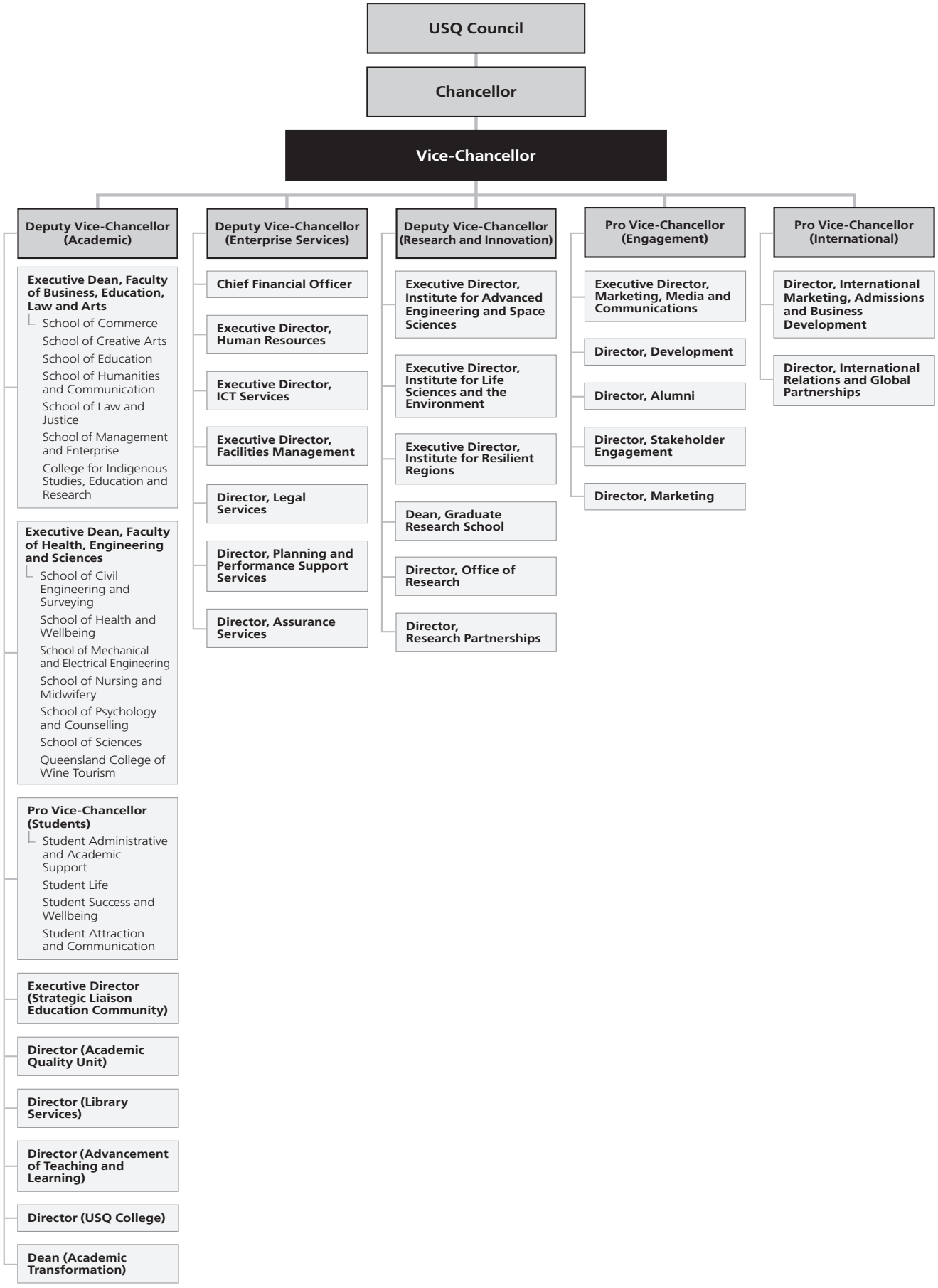
The University's 2020 priorities focused on strategies centred around:

- implementing the *Academic Quality Framework*, and refreshing curriculum and learning and teaching models to improve quality and the student experience
- increasing the level of innovation in the University's learning and teaching program, including further expansion of program offerings, micro-credentialing, first year experience and work-integrated learning to improve student outcomes and employability
- establishing a student charter and students as partners approach
- commencing redesign of the academic calendar to increase flexibility and reduce attrition
- establishing and implementing an Academic Performance Expectations Framework
- strengthening the University's service performance culture
- continuing to improve research culture, reputation and impact, and deepening research capability
- strengthening industry and community engagement to enhance education and research
- embracing and engaging with alumni as an integral and valued part of the USQ story and future
- supporting growth and financial sustainability through leveraging data, investment in digital services, and further optimising productivity and quality through continuous improvement.

The University made sustained progress against these priorities in 2020, despite the challenges faced by COVID-19. These achievements are detailed in this Report.

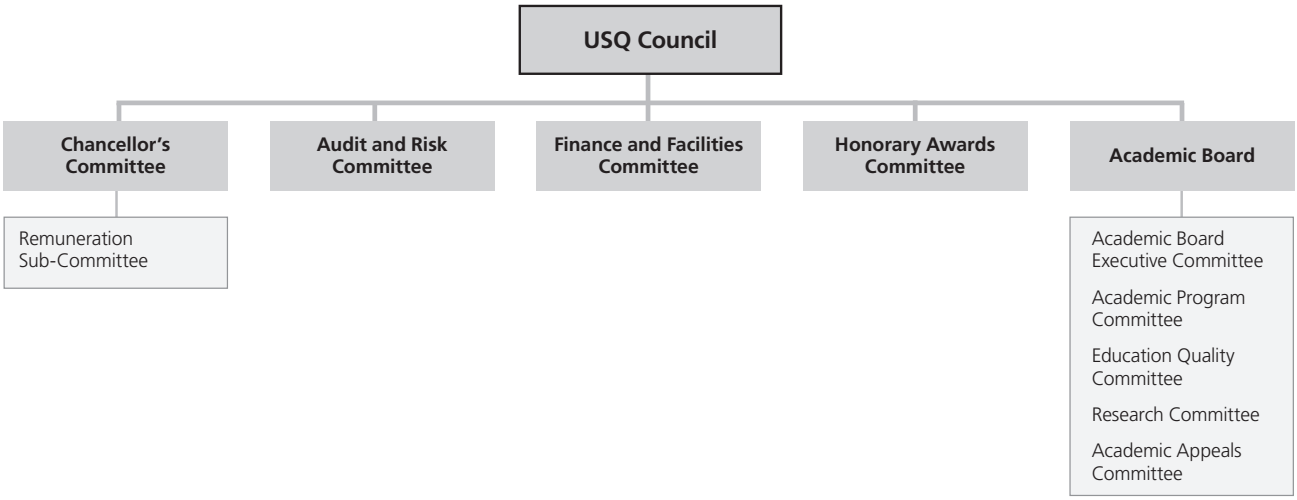
USQ Organisational Structure

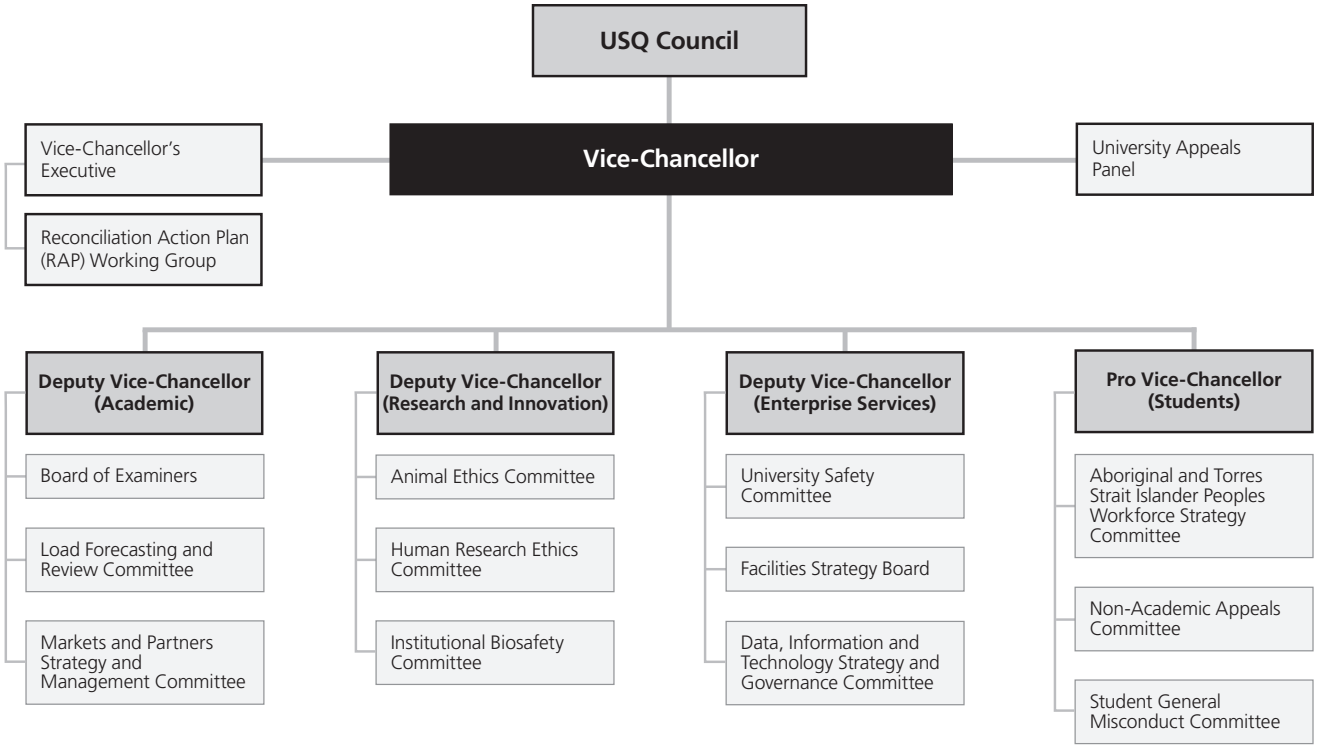
as at 31 December 2020



USQ Committee Structure

as at 19 November 2020





USQ Management

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

Vice-Chancellor

Professor Geraldine Mackenzie

LLB *QIT*, LLM *QUT*, PhD *UNSW*, FAAL, FQA, FIML, GAICD

The Vice-Chancellor is the chief executive officer of USQ. As Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mackenzie is responsible for the academic, administrative, financial and other affairs of the University, and promotes the interests and furthers the development of USQ. The Vice-Chancellor has line-management responsibility for the Deputy Vice-Chancellors and the Pro Vice-Chancellors who, with the Vice-Chancellor and other leadership staff, comprise the University's leadership team. The position is accountable to the University Council for the academic and financial health of the University.

The Vice-Chancellor exercises general supervision over the activities and welfare of staff and students. The Vice-Chancellor has all such powers and duties as may be necessary or convenient to enable her to carry out her responsibilities.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Professor Karen Nelson

BIT, BIT(Hons), PhD *QUT*, PFHEA

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has overall responsibility for the planning, quality and delivery of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programs, and for achieving high-quality student outcomes. As head of the Academic Division, the position provides strategic direction, leadership and management of the functions of the Academic Division which comprises the Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences; Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts; Students Portfolio; Office for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (OALT); Academic Quality Unit; USQ College; and Library Services.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise Services)

Mr Michael Thomas

BBus *QUT*, PGCertMgt *USQ*

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise Services) has overall management responsibility for the University's business functions, including Human Resources, Facilities Management, Planning and Performance Support Services, Legal Services, Financial Services, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Services. This role is responsible for the University's organisational performance; development and improvement through strategic leadership of the corporate services that underpin the successful operation of the University, including the strategic positioning of the University's physical, information, financial and human resources.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

Professor John Bell

BSc(Hons) *Sydney*, PhD *UNSW*

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) leads the Research and Innovation Division of the University and is responsible for providing strategic direction, leadership and management of the University's research activities. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)'s role is to enhance the University's research profile, its research performance, and its culture of research excellence and quality research training.

The position oversees the fostering of collaborations and partnerships with government, industry and the community to deliver applied research outcomes that have regional relevance, align with national and international priorities, and deliver global impact. The Research and Innovation Division comprises the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Graduate Research School, Office of Research, and the University's three Research Institutes and nine Research Centres.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)

Professor John Cole

BA (Hons) PhD *Qld*

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement) is responsible for the leadership and management of key engagement activities at USQ, and works with colleagues across all campuses to realise the University's commitment to working with and for our diverse communities. The Portfolio includes Advancement and Fundraising, Alumni Relations and Development, Business and Community Engagement, Partnerships, Marketing, Media and Communications. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement) also fulfils the responsibilities of Head of USQ Springfield and USQ Ipswich with a focus primarily on external engagement and contact at these campuses.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)

Professor Ren Yi

BA *BUAA*, MBA *Swinburne*, PhD *Melb*

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) provides a University-wide leadership role in international strategy in addition to critical leadership and direction in the USQ International Portfolio, broader USQ community and beyond; together with continuing strategic development of international activities and engagement. The position leads the development of the University's international strategies and plans; manages and develops international agreements, relationships and partnerships; creates strategic mobility initiatives; identifies and leverages opportunities to grow research capacity in international markets; and provides high-level strategic and operational advice on international regulatory matters, projects and proposals across all domains of University activity.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)

(from 2 March 2020)

Professor Josh Pienaar

BSc(CM) *Pretoria*, GCertTertEd *CQU*, MBA *Bond*, PhD *CQU*, FAIB, FRSN, GAICD

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) is responsible for delivering on the University's priorities related to the student experience. The role provides the strategic leadership to drive innovation in student success, retention, and graduate and career outcomes by strengthening student engagement at the University. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) plays a central role in the non-academic component of the student journey and experience. The Portfolio includes Outreach and Engagement, Student and Academic Support, Student Life, and Student Success and Wellbeing.

Executive Dean (Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts)

Professor Barbara de la Harpe

BSc(Hons) *Rand Afrikaans*, GradDipEd *Curtin*, PhD *Curtin*

The Executive Dean, Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts is responsible for providing strategic direction, as well as leadership and management of the functions (learning and teaching, research, operational, service and outreach) of the Faculty and the Faculty's six Schools. The Faculty comprises the Schools of Creative Arts, Humanities and Communication, Commerce, Law and Justice, Management and Enterprise, and Education. The Executive Dean also manages the College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER).

Executive Dean (Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences)

Professor Glen Coleman

BVSc(Hons) *Qld*, GDipBiotech *QUT*, PhD *Qld*

The Executive Dean, Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences is responsible for providing strategic direction, leadership and management of the functions and schools in the Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences. The Faculty comprises the Schools of Sciences, Civil Engineering and Surveying, Health and Wellbeing, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Nursing and Midwifery, and Psychology and Counselling. The Executive Dean also has executive responsibility for the Queensland College of Wine Tourism (QCWT), a joint venture winery and training centre, in conjunction with the Queensland Government.

Chief Financial Officer

Athol Kerridge

DipCoDirCrs *AICD*, BBus *USQ*, MBA *USQ*, FCPA

The Chief Financial Officer has the management responsibility for the operations of the Financial Services Department. Financial Services provides expertise and support in relation to financial operations, procurement, contract management and associated system, financial systems and management accounting functions, including related financial management policies and procedures, and insurance. In addition to core financial services, Business Services such as the print function, bookshop, refectory services and a range of ancillary services including the vehicle pool fleet operations, Stores and Distribution and associated administrative support for these functions, are also part of the overall positional responsibilities.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Services)

(until 31 January 2020)

Helen Nolan

BBus *USQ*

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Services) was responsible for delivering on the University's priorities related to the student experience. The role provides the strategic leadership to drive innovation in student success, retention, and graduate and career outcomes by strengthening student engagement at the University. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Services) plays a central role in the non-academic component of the student journey and experience. The Portfolio includes Marketing and Student Attraction, Student and Academic Support, Student Life, and Student Success and Wellbeing. This role was discontinued early in 2020.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)

(until 7 February 2020)

Professor Helen Partridge

BA GCertEd PGDipPsych *Qld*, GDipLib&InSt MIT PhD *QUT*, FALIA

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) was responsible for providing strategic direction, leadership and management of the functions and departments that comprise the Education Portfolio which incorporates the Office for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (OALT), Library Services, and Open Access College (OAC). The Portfolio is responsible for supporting and facilitating the University's education strategy, and is responsible for ensuring a culture of excellence and innovation in learning and teaching. This role was discontinued early in 2020.

Vice-Chancellor's Executive

The Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE), comprising all members of the senior executive, is a key advisory committee to the Vice-Chancellor on all matters relating to the management of the University and on the setting of strategic directions and the development of policy.

Specifically, VCE provides advice to the Vice-Chancellor on the following matters:

- The management of the University.
- The relevance, implementation and modification of existing policies and strategies, and on the development of new ones considered desirable.
- The development and review of strategic and operational planning through the review of plans, and negotiation of planning outcomes.
- Institutional performance in all areas of its operation.
- The development of the University's budget methodology and budget allocation.
- The academic and infrastructure planning and development of the University, including Facilities Strategy and Information Communication Technology Strategy.
- The assurance of regulatory compliance and ethical accountability for the institution.
- The implementation of risk management across the University.
- Reports containing recommendations and advice from management committees as required.
- The continued development of University-wide communication and cooperation.
- Other strategic matters referred to the committee by members.

For 2020, VCE met 22 times.

Executive Service to the Professions and the Community

Vice-Chancellor Professor Geraldine Mackenzie

Professor Mackenzie became a Board Member of Universities Australia, the sector's peak body, on 31 July 2020, and a Board Member of the Regional Australia Institute on 2 November 2020. Professor Mackenzie is also a Board Member of the Ipswich Hospital Foundation, becoming Chair from 2 October 2020, and was also a Board Member of the Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise until 29 September 2020. Professor Mackenzie is a member of the Australian Government Space Industry Leaders Forum, and represents the University on the Regional Universities Network Vice-Chancellors Group and the Queensland Vice-Chancellors Committee. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law, the Queensland Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders, and as a Barrister-at-Law, is a member of the Bar Association of Queensland.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Karen Nelson

As Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Nelson represents USQ on the Universities Australia and Regional Universities Australia (RUN) DVC (Academic) groups. Professor Nelson is the chief editor of Student Success, an open access journal exploring the experiences of students in tertiary education. She has been a member of the organising committee, Chair or Co-chair of the annual Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention & Success (STARS) Conference (and its predecessor FYHE conferences) for more than 12 years. Professor Nelson also serves the sector as an external expert for the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise Services) Michael Thomas

Mr Thomas is a continuing member of the Universities Australia Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate) Group, and represents this Group in the Australian Network of University Planners.

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) Professor John Bell

Professor Bell is a Fellow of Engineers Australia, a member of the Australian Institute of Physics, the American Physical Society, the American Chemistry Society and the Smart Energy Council. Professor Bell is also a Board Member for the Queensland Cyber Infrastructure Foundation.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement) Professor John Cole

Professor Cole continued as Chair of Queensland's Rural Economies Centre of Excellence, a collaboration between USQ, The University of Queensland, CQ University, James Cook University and the Queensland Government. He also chairs the Clean Growth Choices consortium, a multi-party collaboration delivering the Queensland Government's Communities in Transition program. He is an Honorary Professor at The University of Queensland Business School and a member of the Policy Advisory Board for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) Professor Ren Yi

Professor Yi was elected to the Board of the International Education Association of Australia on 16 October 2020 for a two-year term. He is a member of the Australasian Research Management Society, the International Network of Research Management Societies, and Universities Australia Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) Executive Group. He serves as a reviewer of the Australia Research Council and the European Commission, including Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ programs.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) Professor Josh Pienaar

Professor Pienaar currently serves as an external expert for the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, is an external reviewer for the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority, and a specialist for the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications. In 2020, he chaired the Australian Institute of Building (AIB) Accreditation Panel for Victoria University, as well as the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and is an active member of the AIB Course Accreditation Committee. Professor Pienaar is the co-founder of the Australasian Building Information Modelling Academic Forum. He is a Fellow of both the Australian Institute of Building and the Royal Society of New South Wales.

Executive Dean (Business, Education, Law and Arts) Professor Barbara de la Harpe

In 2020, Professor de la Harpe continued as a Board Member of the Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, and Chair of the Regional Universities Network Executive Women Group.

Executive Dean (Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences) Professor Glen Coleman

Professor Coleman is current Chair of the Australian Veterinary Association Queensland Division education subcommittee and remains active in national and international veterinary accreditation matters. Professor Coleman also serves as a Board Member for the Ipswich Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Queensland College of Wine Tourism, and Southern Queensland Rural Health.

Chief Financial Officer Athol Kerridge

Mr Kerridge is a Fellow of CPA Australia, a Board Member of the Queensland College of Wine Tourism, and was appointed to The Glennie School Council for a three year term commencing on 1 October 2020.

Governance

Governing body – USQ Council

Under Sections 7 to 11 of the *USQ Act 1998*, the University Council is established as the governing body of the University. The Council consists of official, appointed, elected and additional (co-opted) members. As Council members contribute to the development of policy and strategic planning, they are expected to have a knowledge and understanding of the legislative framework within which strategy and policy may be developed and applied in order to minimise risks.

The legislative framework within which the Council operates is the *USQ Act*. The *USQ Act* defines the functions and powers of the Council (at Sections 8 and 9) and sets limits on what the University and its authorities may do.

Under the *USQ Act 1998*, the Council has the power to:

- do anything necessary or convenient to be done for, or in connection with, its functions
- appoint the University's staff
- manage and control the University's affairs and property
- manage and control the University's finances.

The Council may delegate its powers to:

- an appropriately qualified member of the Council
- an appropriately qualified committee that includes one or more members of the Council
- an appropriately qualified member of the University's staff.

However, the Council is not able to delegate its power to make an election policy, nor to adopt the University's annual budget.

A delegation of a power to the Vice-Chancellor may permit the sub-delegation of the power to an appropriately qualified member of the University's staff.

Section 10 of the *USQ Act 1998* states that, in discharging these responsibilities, the Council must act in the way that appears to it most likely to promote the University's interests. In doing so, the Council endeavours to monitor and assess its performance, both collectively and in terms of the individual contributions of members.

The University also complies with the Voluntary Code of Best Practice for the Governance of Australian Public Universities.

Insurance premiums have been paid to insure each of the Councillors and officers of the University against any costs and expenses incurred by them in defending any legal proceeding arising out of their conduct while acting in their capacity as officers of the University.

USQ Council members are able to receive remuneration for attendance at Council meetings and Council activities. Council members who are also University employees receive their normal remuneration while attending to Council business. The University accepts financial responsibility for travel costs related to Council meetings and Council activities. Remuneration details can be accessed at:
usq.edu.au/about-usq/governance-leadership/plans-reports

USQ Council key achievements in 2020

Council governs all the University's affairs, finances and property. Some selected specific achievements in 2020 include the following:

- Approval of the 2019 USQ Annual Report and Financial Statements.
- Approval of the USQ Annual Plan and Budget for 2021.
- Approval of monthly Financial Statements throughout the year.
- Approval of University domestic, international and administrative fee schedules for 2021/2022.
- Approval of the appointment of Mrs Helen Nolan, Executive Director (Strategic Liaison Education Community), USQ as Council's representative on the USQ Student Guild Board for a two-year term from May 2020 to May 2022.
- Approval of updated terms of reference for all Council committees (including the Academic Board).
- Approval of an updated Charter of University Governance.
- Approval of an updated Assurance (Internal Audit) Charter.
- Approval of an interim Fraud and Corruption Management Policy.
- Approval of a revised Delegations Policy and revised Financial Delegations Schedule.
- Approval of repeal of the Conflict Resolution Mechanisms and Grievances for Committees and Boards Policy.
- Holding a half-day Reflective Forum to consider specific strategic matters.
- Authorised the Vice-Chancellor to progress the Springfield Engineering (F Block) refurbishment, noting that the project exceeded the Vice-Chancellor's financial delegation.
- Authorised the Vice-Chancellor to approve the Significant Procurement Plan (SPP) for the procurement of University Security Services, noting that the purchase exceeded the Vice-Chancellor's financial delegation.
- Approval of an Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy
- Approval of a Public Interest Disclosure Policy
- Approval of a Corrupt Conduct Reporting Policy.

10th USQ Council

(07/10/2017 to 06/10/2021)

Meetings and membership[1]

The 10th Council of the University met on seven occasions during 2020. Membership was as follows:

Chancellor (ex-officio)

Mr John Dornbusch
BEd *UNE*, BEd MBA *USQ*, OPM *Harvard*, FAICD

Retired Chair, Dornbusch Partners Pty Ltd, Toowoomba

7/7
[5/6] *Chair, Chancellor's Committee*
[0/1] *Chair, Remuneration Sub-Committee*
[2/2] *Chair, Honorary Awards Committee*
[5/6] *Member, Audit and Risk Committee*
[5/6] *Member, Finance and Facilities Committee*

Vice-Chancellor (ex-officio)

Professor Geraldine Mackenzie
LLB *QIT*, LLM *QUT*, PhD *UNSW*, FAAL, FQA, FIML, GAICD

7/7
[6/6] *Member, Chancellor's Committee*
[2/2] *Member, Honorary Awards Committee*
[6/6] *Member, Finance and Facilities Committee*

Chair, Academic Board (ex-officio)

Professor Grant Daggard
DipEd BA(Hons) PhD *Macquarie*

7/7
[5/6] *Member, Chancellor's Committee*
[2/2] *Member, Honorary Awards Committee*

One member of the full-time academic staff of the University, elected by members of that staff

Professor Pauline Collins
LLB *Adelaide*, BVisArt GDipProfComm *USQ*, LLM PhD *Qld*

Professor (Law), School of Law and Justice, Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts, USQ

7/7
[2/2] *Member, Honorary Awards Committee*

One member of the full-time staff of the University, other than the academic staff, elected by members of that staff

Mrs Mary McGilvray
BSc (Psych) *USQ*

Senior Executive Officer (Facilities Management), USQ

6/7
[2/2] *Member, Honorary Awards Committee*

One student member, elected by the enrolled students of the University

Ms Lauren Walsburg – to 29/03/2020
BA *USQ*

Enrolled student, Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts, USQ

2/2

Mr Grant Vickery – from 29/05/2020

Enrolled student, Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences, USQ

4/4

Five members appointed by the Governor-in-Council

Ms Rachel Barlow
BBus *USQ*, GDipAppFinInv *Finsia*, FFin, CFP®

Senior Private Client Advisor, MGD Wealth Ltd

7/7
[6/6] *Member, Finance and Facilities Committee*
[1/1] *Member, Remuneration Sub-Committee*

Mr Chris Bazley
BBus *Qld*, FAICD

Agricultural Business Advisor/Farmer

7/7
[6/6] *Chair, Finance and Facilities Committee*
[6/6] *Member, Audit and Risk Committee*
[6/6] *Member, Chancellor's Committee*
[1/1] *Member, Remuneration Sub-Committee*

Dr Carol Cox AM
MBChB *Edin,* FRACGP FRCP

Fellow of USQ, Retired Family Practitioner, Toowoomba

7/7
[6/6] *Member, Chancellor's Committee*
[2/2] *Member, Honorary Awards Committee*

Mr Brett Delaney
BCom *Qld*, FCA

Retired President, National Heart Foundation of Australia (Qld Division). Retired Member, National Board, National Heart Foundation of Australia. Retired Assurance Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers. Retired Chair of Audit Committee, Honeycombes Property Group.

7/7
[5/6] *Chair, Audit and Risk Committee*
[5/6] *Member, Chancellor's Committee*
[5/6] *Member, Finance and Facilities Committee*

[1] [2/2] refers to Meetings attended/Meetings eligible to attend

[2] One position vacant

Assistant Commissioner Charysse Pond APM
BA(Soc) *CQU*, GradDipCrim *QUT*, MLship&Mgt(Policing) *CSU*, GradCertAppliedMgt *AIPM*

Operational Commander, People Capability Command, Queensland Police Service

7/7

[1/1] *Member, Remuneration Sub-Committee*

Three additional members[2] appointed by the USQ Council, one of whom must be a graduate of the University

Ms Heidi Dugan
BCA *USQ*, AssocDip(IntlTrade) *RMIT*

Television and Live Broadcast Host. Member of Board of Directors, AustCham Shanghai. Director and Co-Owner, Chef Mama. Health and Wellness Lifestyle Coach.

7/7

Mr George Fox (Deputy Chancellor)
BCom LLB (Hons) *Qld*

Solicitor, Adjunct Professor of Law

7/7

[6/6] *Member, Audit and Risk Committee*
[6/6] *Member, Chancellor's Committee*
[6/6] *Member, Finance and Facilities Committee*

USQ Council is supported by the Governance Office, headed by the University Secretary

Professor Mark Toleman
BAppSc GDipInfProc *DDIAE*, MSc *JCU*, PhD *Qld*, MACS, MAIS, MAICD

Legislative Compliance

TEQSA registration

The Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) is the regulator of Australia's higher education sector. The University is required to comply with the TEQSA *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* as part of its registration as a higher education provider in Australia.

The University's re-registration in May 2018 included one condition relating to 'Governance and Accountability Reporting Obligations'. The University submitted two non-statutory items of required evidence to TEQSA in 2019, and the first of the statutory submissions of the Academic Board and Council minutes in 2020, with the remaining submission due in 2021. The University is continuing to implement processes and initiatives to meet the requirements of the re-registration condition, and progress to date has been deemed satisfactory by TEQSA.

Academic Board

USQ maintains an Academic Board with defined roles under Part 4, Division 3 of the *USQ Act*. The Academic Board serves as the key advisory committee to USQ Council on academic matters. The Board monitors the academic activities of the University's faculties, while promoting teaching, scholarship and research, and developing and reviewing academic policy.

The term of office of the current Academic Board is three years from 31 July 2018. The term of the current Board will continue up to, but not including, the regular meeting of the Academic Board in July 2021.

The Board comprises of 35 members, including members of the Senior Executive, representatives from key areas of USQ, academic staff, and student representatives. Five standing committees report to and advise the Academic Board – Academic Appeals Committee, Academic Board Executive Committee, Academic Program Committee, Education Quality Committee, and Research Committee.

The Board met on six occasions throughout 2020. Recommendations were considered for the reaccreditation of seven existing programs and the accreditation of 13 new programs. Recommendations were considered for the discontinuation of six existing programs.

The Academic Board's focus for 2020 has been to monitor management responses to the TEQSA re-registration condition, as mentioned above. Other actions have included:

- Approval for establishment of the Research Training Sub-Committee as a sub-committee of Research Committee.
- Development of an Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy.

Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019 (Qld)

USQ is a statutory body under Queensland's *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*. The Standard provides a framework for the development and implementation of systems, practices and controls for the efficient, effective and economic financial and performance management of the University. USQ has a range of policies, procedures and systems in place to ensure compliance with its responsibilities under the Standard in the areas of strategic and operational planning, performance management and review, general resource management, internal audit, and reporting.

The USQ Planning, Reporting and Review Framework

Under Queensland's *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*, USQ is required to have in place a strategic plan covering a period of at least four financial years, and processes for annual operational planning and performance reviews that meet specific legislative guidelines. The USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020 was approved by USQ Council in March 2016 and the University develops an Annual Plan and Budget which meets legislative requirements.

With the *USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020* reaching expiry, significant consultation, review and assessment activity across the University has informed development of the new *USQ Strategic Plan 2021–2025*, a draft of which was considered by USQ Council in December 2020. It is anticipated that the final version will be considered by Council in March 2021.

USQ also enacted further improvements to its *Planning, Reporting and Review Framework* in 2020. This included the development and initial implementation of an Integrated Planning Framework and calendar that provides increased alignment and transparency between USQ's Strategic Objectives, the underpinning Operational Planning, and resource allocation.

Financial management practices

USQ has a number of policies and procedures published as part of the *Financial Management Practice Manual (FMPM)*. The FMPM provides an authoritative internal source of information and guidance to assist the University to manage its financial resources, and meet its financial responsibilities and obligations. The FMPM includes policies in relation to financial management and accountability, revenue, expenditure, assets and liabilities to support the financial management and financial operation of the University, and these are reviewed regularly in accordance with the policy review cycle.

Financial reporting arrangements

Internally, monthly financial statements are reported to Council's Finance and Facilities Committee. These are recommended for approval to Council. The unaudited Annual Financial Statements are considered by the Finance and Facilities Committee at its February meeting, and recommended for approval to Council at its following meeting for inclusion in the USQ Annual Report after audit by the Queensland Audit Office.

In line with USQ's status as a not-for-profit Higher Education Provider established under the *USQ Act 1998*, and a statutory body as defined in the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, the Annual Financial Statements represent the audited general-purpose financial statements of the University. They are prepared on an accrual basis and comply with Australian Accounting Standards. Additionally, the statements have been prepared in accordance with the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (Financial Statement Guidelines) and the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019* issued pursuant to the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*.

Assurance Services

The Council and the Vice-Chancellor recognise Assurance Services (Risk Management, Compliance and Internal Audit) as key components of USQ's governance framework. Operating independently, Assurance Services provides objective assurance and advisory service to:

- the Vice-Chancellor on the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, internal control, compliance and governance processes
- the Vice-Chancellor and Council that USQ's financial and operational controls are designed and operating in an efficient, effective, economical and ethical manner within acceptable risk
- assist management in improving the University's performance.

Internal audit

The Assurance Charter, which is reviewed annually, establishes the authority and responsibility conferred on Assurance Services so that it may operate as an effective function of the University in accordance with the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and the *Financial and Performance and Management Standard 2019*. The Charter is consistent with the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference. The Charter was reviewed and endorsed by the Vice Chancellor and the Audit and Risk Committee, before being approved by Council.

Assurance Services plays a key role in:

- developing and maintaining a culture of accountability and integrity
- facilitating the integration of risk management into day-to-day business activities and processes
- promoting a culture of cost consciousness, self-assessment and adherence to high ethical standards.

In 2020, an Internal Audit Plan was implemented by Assurance Services and augmented through an established co-sourced partner arrangement. The Internal Audit Plan provides an appropriate level of assurance to the University Council, Audit and Risk Committee, and management by focusing on key risks, business processes and information systems across the University.

In 2020, five individual audits were delivered across a range of audit types, including financial, compliance and performance audits. These audits included Grade Finalisation and Release Process, Research Supervisor Training, Payroll, Total Asset Management, and Cybersecurity.

Compliance

USQ routinely monitors the external environment to ensure that compliance with regulatory instruments remains embedded in policies and procedures.

Risk management

The *USQ Risk Management Policy* and *USQ Risk Management Plan* have been adopted to establish a Risk Management Framework informed by international standards (ISO 31000:2018 and aligned to the *Institute of Internal Auditors Framework*) to comply with the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*.

The University continues to identify and document its most significant risks, with active monitoring and consideration of risk-reduction strategies undertaken through University committees and reviewed by executive management. Reporting on risk management activities is provided to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive, the Audit and Risk Committee, and Council. During 2020 all material risks were reviewed to consider the impact of COVID-19 on University operations.

Overall there has been a continual maturing of the audit and risk activities at USQ which confidently provides governance and management with high-quality reporting on the University's risk profile and the status of associated risk management activities.

Audit and Risk Committee

The University Council has in place the Audit and Risk Committee, operated in accordance with *Audit Committee Guidelines – Improving Accountability and Performance*, published by the Queensland Government Treasury Department.

The primary purpose of the Audit and Risk Committee is to provide independent assistance to the University Council by overseeing and monitoring the governance, risk, control and compliance frameworks, as well as internal accountability requirements of the University and its controlled entities.

The Vice-Chancellor's Executive provides advice and assurance to the Audit and Risk Committee on the effectiveness of the risk management framework and the management of risk.

The Audit and Risk Committee is independent of management. During 2020, the Committee comprised three members of the Council (one of whom, the Deputy Chancellor is *ex-officio*), who are not employees or students of the University and are able to contribute to the broad skills base relevant to the business of the Committee; and two persons external to the Council and staff of the University who represent the accounting profession with experience in auditing. Members of the Audit and Risk Committee are as follows:

Council Members:

Mr Brett Delaney (Chair)

BCom *Qld*, FCA

Retired President, National Heart Foundation of Australia (Queensland Division); Retired Member, National Board, National Heart Foundation of Australia; Retired Assurance Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers; Retired Chair of Audit Committee, Honeycombes Property Group

Mr John Dornbusch (Chancellor)

BEd *UNE*, BEd MBA *USQ*, OPM *Harvard*, FAICD

Retired Chair, Dornbusch Partners Pty Ltd, Toowoomba

Mr Chris Bazley

BBus *Qld*, FAICD

Agricultural Business Advisor/Farmer

Mr George Fox AM (Deputy Chancellor)

BCom LLB (Hons) *Qld*

Solicitor, Adjunct Professor of Law

External non-Council Members:

Mr Tim Davis

BBus *USQ*, FCA, CTA

Consultant, Horizon Accounting Group, Toowoomba

Mrs Kylee Valentine

BCom *USQ*, FCA

Senior Partner – Brisbane, Findex Australia.

The University Secretary, **Professor Mark Toleman**, served as secretary to the Committee.

The Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise Services) and Chief Financial Officer attended Audit and Risk Committee meetings by invitation, had rights of audience and debate, but were not members of the Committee.

The USQ Council reviewed the financial statements and accounting policies for appropriateness and compliance with prescribed accounting and other requirements, with reference to recommendations by the Queensland Audit Office.

The Audit and Risk Committee met on six occasions during 2020. Remuneration details can be accessed via: **usq.edu.au/about-usq/governance-leadership/plans-reports**

Some selected specific achievements of the Committee in 2020 include the following:

- Appointment of Head of Assurance Services.
- Review and approval of six final internal audit reports.
- Approval of the 2021 Internal Audit Plan.
- Review of the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference for recommending to USQ Council for approval.
- Endorsement of the insurance strategy for the University's 2021 insurance renewal program.
- Receipt of regular reports on Risk Management.
- Monitoring of fraud control activities.
- Receipt and monitoring of regular management reports, including on Integrity and Professional Conduct, Litigation, Information Privacy, Safety, Workplace Relations, Right to Information, Legal Discovery, and Administrative Access.

External Scrutiny

Independent scrutiny of the University's performance is provided by a range of State bodies which may publish reports on significant operational or performance issues.

Other Legislative Requirements

Records and information management

The University continues to mature its records and information management practices and compliance with the *Public Records Act 2002 (Qld)*, the *Queensland State Archives Records Governance Policy* and the *Records Governance Policy Implementation Guideline*. Internally, the *Records and Information Management Policy*, and *Procedure* direct and guide the University's management of its records and information in order to meet its obligations and business needs.

Record-keeping business tools, including the authorised retention and disposal schedules, the record-keeping self-assessment tool, the business system compliance checklist, and a decommissioning tool for software, have been deployed to assist employees with their responsibilities.

During 2020, the records and information management program included the following activities:

- Deployment, training and functional support of the electronic document and records management system (Content Manager).
- Development of a defensible process for the disposal of contact information tracing records.
- Office 365 records compliance and governance.
- Progression of a digitisation program for corporate, student and employee files, including the development of a digitisation toolkit.
- Consultancy and advisory services for internal and external enquiries.
- Provision of a self-paced online training module for staff delivered through the professional development program.
- Information lifecycle management that includes creating, storing, using, sharing, archiving, and authorised disposal of records and information.
- Development of the Enterprise Information Management Framework.

The USQ Historical Archives, managed by Enterprise Information Management Services, continues to play an important role in preserving the history and memory of the University.

There were no serious breaches of the public authority's record-keeping system during 2020.

Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld)

USQ continued to meet its statutory obligations under the *Right to Information Act 2009* (Qld) through:

- the proactive release of documents under the University's Administrative Access Scheme (where possible)
- the processing of formal access requests for documents held by the University
- maintaining its Publication Scheme, which describes and categorises information routinely available
- maintaining its Disclosure Log, which makes information available that has been released in response to an access application under the Act
- ensuring the Right to Information policy and procedures are in place
- mandatory Right to Information training as a component of the e-Induction program.

No formal requests under the *Right to Information Act 2009* (Qld) were processed in the reporting period.

Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)

The University fulfils its privacy obligations by adopting good governance measures. Senior staff are responsible for managing privacy in their areas of accountability. The Privacy Officer, a senior manager, is responsible for facilitating internal and external privacy enquiries, complaints, and access and amendment requests. There were seven access applications processed in 2020. Standing reports are provided regularly to the Audit and Risk Committee.

The University meets its privacy obligations through appropriate governance measures and provision of privacy information, online training and support services to staff and students. Compliance with the information privacy principles continues to be provided through the Privacy Office.

Queensland Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 (Qld)

In accordance with the *Queensland Public Sectors Ethics Act 1994* (Qld),the University fosters a values-driven culture centred around the key values of respect, integrity and excellence. Strategies adopted include binding staff to a Code of Conduct, and continually educating employees about the ethical standards expected in the workplace during induction orientation, and annual mandatory compliance and awareness training.

In accordance with the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* (Qld), the University's Code of Conduct provides the standards of conduct consistent with the ethics principles and values of public sector entities and the University's core values. Employees are required to undertake an online training course each year, as well as on initial induction.

Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)

Since the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld) commenced on 1 January 2020, the University has progressed a review of all complaint management policies and procedures to embed all obligations. This work, due for completion in late-2020, will include guidance to staff, students and the public about human rights complaint processes.

Awareness and training material provided by the Queensland Human Rights Commission has been incorporated into the University's Human Resources Learning Hub to promote broad understanding of the application of the Act.

There were no human rights complaints received by the University during 2020.

A three-year action plan, established for employee-related matters, has resulted in the following outcomes to date, to reflect obligations under the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld):

- Executive management briefed on human rights principles and implications.
- There were 14 human resource policies revised.
- Processes were established to embed human rights principles into future human resource policy development.

Integrity and professional conduct

In delivering professional services in support of our academic objectives, the University continues to strengthen its ethical culture through activities that have included revising the fraud and corruption policy in response to a recent fraud risk assessment. Prevention material made available by the Crime and Corruption Commission, Queensland Ombudsman, and Office of the Information Commissioner, is discussed at executive management and Council meetings.

Trust is important for the University and its staff. A perception of wrongdoing can diminish trust regardless of how well a function is performed. Therefore, the University has strict integrity requirements covering conflict of interest, gifts and benefits, meeting protocols, decision making, and professional conduct complaints.

Strengthening the integrity framework is a constant organisational objective and a major responsibility of the Director (Integrity and Professional Conduct). This is achieved through continuous improvement of the University's integrity systems and practices, and ongoing revision of the policy, procedures and administrative standards impacting integrity and professional conduct.

Supporting Queensland Government's Objectives for the Community

USQ actively supports the Queensland government's objectives for the community – as stated in *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities* – through its teaching, research and engagement programs.

Unite and recover

- To address the challenges faced by students brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the University moved all course materials, assessments and examinations online, and introduced a suite of academic concessions.
- Additionally, the University introduced a needs-based personalised financial support package to assist students that were impacted by COVID-19. This resulted in financial support of more than $2.35 million going to over 1,400 students, as well as the provision of 178 computers to students who would otherwise have used on-campus computer laboratories.
- Also, a Student Emergency Support Fund was created with approximately $50, 000 collected from over 100 donations from staff and the wider USQ community to assist in supporting students impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Create jobs in a strong economy

- Researchers from USQ's Institute for Advanced Engineering and Space Sciences work with more than 70 aerospace, defence, agricultural machinery and civil engineering companies to deliver knowledge, cutting-edge technologies and industry solutions at the forefront of discovery.
- USQ's Centre for Future Materials are working with the Australian rail industry to produce and install fibre-reinforced polymer composite bridge sleepers across the country, including the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge.
- The Rural Economies Centre of Excellence completed a Queensland-based study which investigated how regional communities benefit from improved digital connectivity. The study focused on the isolated western regions of Barcoo, Diamantina as well as Central West and Northern Queensland. This study has provided recommendations for establishing businesses in the remote regions and has outlined the potential benefits for regional communities.
- USQ's Australian Collaboratory for Career Employment and Learning for Living (ACCELL) is a multi-disciplinary research and research-training team which addresses the role of dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations in individuals' engagement and learning in their work across a variety of settings. ACCELL's 'Vital Infrastructure Workers in Rural Contexts' program is focused on the psychological and social qualities of occupations and workers considered vital to the socio-economic success of rural and regional communities. The program aims to develop resources for employers to enhance their strategies to attract and retain workers in regional areas for essential occupations, such as teaching, nursing, veterinary services, farming and mechanical trades.
- WiRE (Women in Rural, Regional and Remote Enterprises) is designed to empower female entrepreneurs who wish to achieve their start-up dreams and/or grow their business or community ventures without leaving rural parts of the country. Nine new businesses have been initiated in regional Queensland as a result of this program.

Keep Queenslanders healthy:

- USQ graduates a significant cohort of health professionals each year.
- USQ researcher Dr Rajib Rana is working with the State Government through Advance Queensland and their response to COVID-19 to use artificial intelligence to help emergency call operators screen call for signs of distress and prioritise the provision of services.
- USQ researchers have obtained an Indigenous Australians Health Program Grant from the Department of Health for a project which aims to improve wound care in regional and remote Indigenous communities.
- USQ researchers are working with partners, including Cancer Council Queensland and Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, to improve cancer survivorship and quality of life for regional Queenslanders.
- USQ is spearheading a project to develop an online platform giving young people direct access to tailored mental health information and support. The online platform integrates detection, assessment and tailored interventions addressing common mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, substance use and sleep problems.
- USQ Ipswich operates a Sport and Exercise Clinic which offers major benefits to the local community, providing an exercise rehabilitation service for people with chronic and complex health conditions, who may be unable to pay for private exercise physiology services, or who have exhausted available publicly funded services within the hospital system.

- USQ researchers are focusing on behavioural approaches for the promotion of active lifestyles, looking at sedentary behaviour, muscle strengthening exercise, holistic movement and mental health. Their work has analysed large data sets to determine whether people do enough muscle strengthening activity, as well as currently researching the benefits of moving more and sitting less and how to change such behaviours.
- USQ researchers are looking to improve health outcomes, specifically chronic diseases, including obesity, diabetes, HIV/sexual health, and hepatitis, among vulnerable communities. A collective of researchers from varied disciplines (including psychology, economics, nursing, health and wellbeing, and exercise science) are working in partnership with affected communities, health practitioners and industry stakeholders to improve health behaviours and outcomes.

Reduce Queensland's contribution to climate change

- Researchers from USQ's Centre for Agricultural Engineering are focusing on capturing energy from solid and liquid waste streams from the intensive livestock sector to increase biogas production and decrease the need for methods of waste disposal that negatively impact the surrounding environment. Similar work for the Queensland sugar cane industry is enabling sugar cane producers to use a portion of cane trash for biogas production which can be used to offset energy costs, with the non-degradable portion converted to a valuable source of minerals and organic matter for recycling on the fields.
- Increasing energy costs are one of the major challenges facing Australian agriculture, and a key driver of energy efficiency. A reduction in direct on-farm energy use enables farmers to proactively respond to rising energy costs and contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gases. Information on optimising irrigation system performance, energy efficiency, selecting alternative farming systems or methods, best management practices and the benefits of emerging technologies is being developed at USQ and delivered to industry via training workshops, field days, fact sheets and web resources. USQ projects will also increase awareness of on-farm energy use and highlight the importance of energy assessments, particularly when considering infrastructure change.
- USQ's Centre for Future Materials is conducting research into the design of cost-effective and high-efficiency thermoelectric materials and devices that directly convert thermal energy into electrical energy, offering a green and sustainable solution for the global energy dilemma. This research is investigating innovative methods for harvesting electricity from waste heat or sunlight, which will place Australia at the forefront of environmentally sustainable energy technologies.

Improve water quality

- USQ has played a key role in the development of on-farm irrigation technologies nationally for the past 20 years by developing precise and automated control systems for a range of irrigation systems across the sugar, cotton and dairy industries. USQ research is focusing on soil structural constraints to productivity, irrigation and wastewater quality, with researchers seeing an immense value in the strategic use of marginal quality water sources for irrigation.
- USQ's Agricultural Engineers are using satellite imagery and micrometeorological 'flux towers' to obtain critical new data to improve land and water modelling. This new information is being combined with data from long-term catchment studies which examine runoff, soil moisture, ground cover and loss of water to the atmosphere, to inform sustainable water management practices. The cutting-edge technologies being developed by USQ are a key tool in helping to deliver improved water use and management practices for existing models, such as the Paddock to Reef Program for the Great Barrier Reef.
- Traditional land use and farming practices have significant detrimental effects on the quality of waterways and coastal environments. Camera-based 'sense and spray' technologies developed by USQ researchers are helping to reduce the amount of herbicides lost in runoff that can ultimately reach important waterways, including the ocean. Sense and Spray technologies have negated the traditional act of spraying herbicides over an entire field, and instead only target specific areas. This not only significantly reduces the cost for Australian farmers, but also keeps farming chemicals out of waterways.

University Strategy

The *USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020* was approved by USQ Council in March 2016. The Strategic Plan states the University's purpose, vision and values; and lists goals, objectives and strategies under the three organisational pillars of Education, Research and Enterprise. Ten strategic success indicators are described for assessing the University's progress towards implementing the Strategic Plan.

In the following sections of this Report, strategies and actions enacted during 2020 to progress the achievements of these goals are discussed.

Education

Overarching goal: *USQ successfully blends access with excellence and is a leading university for student experience and graduate outcomes.*

The University strives to broaden higher education attainment and social impact. Through ensuring the high quality of its programs in partnership with graduate employers and professional bodies, and demonstrating leadership and innovation in the quality of the student experience, USQ enhances its global standing as a source of graduates who excel in the workplace and develop as leaders.

Research

Overarching goal: *USQ is internationally recognised for high-impact research in specified areas of research focus.*

The University works in collaboration with leading partners to develop solutions that can be applied directly to business, industry and the community in the areas of: agriculture and agribusiness; astrophysics; cultural heritage and archaeology; environmental sciences; health and behavioural sciences; hypersonics and rocketry; materials engineering and engineering technology; and regional community and economic development; as well as education and digital literacy.

Enterprise

Overarching goal: *USQ is a socially responsible and well-managed enterprise with a work culture that promotes high performance and is reflective of its values.*

The University aspires to be an employer of choice by embracing a workplace culture that values and recognises staff contributions to the achievement of its priorities. Best practice recruitment and talent management frameworks support a commitment to productivity, diversity, equity and opportunity across the workplace. The University continues to build a profile as an organisation that is a responsible corporate citizen and a business partner of choice by managing its physical and digital infrastructure and systems to ensure its business success and sustainability.

As noted earlier in this Report, with the *USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020* reaching expiry, significant consultation, review and assessment activity across the University has informed development of the new *USQ Strategic Plan 2021–2025*, which it is anticipated will be given final approval by Council in March 2021.

EDUCATION

USQ successfully blends access with excellence and is a leading university for graduate outcomes.

USQ's overarching goal for Education, as stated in the *USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020*, is that USQ successfully blends access with excellence and is a leading university for student experience and graduate outcomes. The University's Vision is to excel within a global context. USQ's education achievement lies not just in providing wide access to enrolment into university awards, but in enabling students with the capability and commitment to successfully complete academic awards that are relevant to their study objectives and future graduate goals. This enablement depends on both the academic (learning and teaching) and the non-academic (general student support and service) experiences of students.

The overarching Education goal is to be reached through the following key objectives.

Objective 1: broaden higher education access and attainment

With one of the most diverse student bodies of any Australian university, USQ continues to provide opportunities for access to higher education for Queenslanders from all walks of life, as well as connecting regional and outer-metropolitan Queensland with the global community.

Domestic recruitment in 2020: bringing higher education to more Queenslanders

The *Become More* campaign theme continued as our key campaign message throughout 2020, including the Semester 1, and 2 campaigns. The creative output of these campaigns emphasised USQ's leading position of graduate salary rankings in Australia. The Semester 1 campaign was in market from late-2019 through to early-March 2020; with the early 2020 activity driving applications as the closing date approached.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, campaign channels and messaging were adjusted to meet changing consumer behaviour. With many advertisers pulling out of the market due to COVID-19, USQ's *"Now, More than Ever"* presence in market with the Semester 2 campaign (27 April–18 July) helped to build brand recognition. Key product areas were targeted to the non-school leaver audience: pathways and selected undergraduate and postgraduate areas of study. With an increase in people returning to study, messaging tied study area themes with the timeliness of flexible study during uncertain times, and the job security further education may provide.

With more people seeking information in news platforms, the channel mix for the Semester 2 campaign was both mass and targeted. TV and radio placements aided awareness and were secured in the Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast markets. Publisher incentives for advertisers allowed USQ to secure in excess of six times the number of placements in the Courier Mail, Toowoomba Chronicle and Queensland Times. Digital news advertising also proved a cost-effective channel driving quality traffic through to the USQ website.

A dedicated Semester 3 campaign targeted at non-school leavers launched at the end of September, focusing on pathways and top study areas. Additional campaigns targeted at the school leaver audience continued to bolster USQ's marketing efforts, including Virtual Open Day, new offers in Aviation and Creative Arts, an extensive Early Offer scheme, and Become Rewarded Scholarships. In addition, dedicated Semester 1 and Change of Preference campaigns launched in late-2020, ensuring USQ was in the market for the remainder of 2020. New markets were also be explored with a gap-year student campaign, also launched at the end of 2020.

Improving participation for students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds

Schools and community outreach

As a regional university, USQ is committed to addressing the significant under-representation of regional students in higher education. The University has a high level of brand recognition and is active in communities with low levels of higher education attainment. A range of immersive school and community outreach programs are offered to students in regional areas that aim to raise educational aspirations and awareness of post-secondary study options and careers. As an example, the Making Career Choices program provided a career outreach service to high school students, parents and teachers to build career decision-making capacity and help make informed decisions concerning pathways into higher education. The program also provided career outreach services to community organisations, supporting staff and clients to broaden their understanding of pathways to higher education.

In 2020, USQ implemented a new initiative, the USQ Discovery Experience trailer. The Discovery Experience trailer offers university exposure to regional school students through the delivery of aspiration building and career development activities. In particular, schools in disadvantaged areas or with high proportions of students from under-represented groups are targeted. The program includes study-area-specific activities for Year 7–12, including Paramedicine, Nursing, Law, Surveying and Aviation, to inspire a range of post-school

study options. The Discovery Experience activities are designed to immerse students in several different study areas of their choice, with an opportunity to engage and ask questions of USQ Student Ambassadors, academics and staff.

Deadly Ways and Indigenous Connections

Deadly Ways works with Indigenous students across Year 7 to 12 to engage them in a positive University experience that contributes to raising their career aspirations and encourages them to consider higher education as part of their career path. Deadly Ways moved into its fourth year of operation at USQ in 2020. It provides a continuous pathway for Indigenous students as they journey through Year 7 to 12 to engage with various aspects of university life, pathway opportunities and study options, and experience cultural activities under the guidance of mentors and other role models. One of the critical goals of this Program for 2020 was to strengthen relationships with schools across the Ipswich and Springfield regions, to increase the awareness of the Program, and subsequently, expanding the reach of the Program for the benefit of young Indigenous people.

Entry pathways – USQ Early Offer

The University's Early Offer initiative allows Year 12 students, who place USQ as their first preference on their Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) application, to receive an early offer to study at USQ. Students can receive an early offer through a recommendation from their principal, or successful completion of a USQ Head Start course. Offers are conditional on applicants meeting the pre-requisites for the program of their choice and on successful completion of Year 12. USQ was the first university to make offers to Year 12 students in the first QTAC round and, in 2020, made 320 offers via this initiative.

Scholarships

The Scholarships Office saw significant growth in demand for scholarships in 2020, assessing over 4 500 applications, an increase of 50% from 2019. This growth has been driven by strategic initiatives to drive enrolments and increased financial stress impacting students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 1 200 students received financial support from a combination of USQ, government and donor or sponsor funding.

In 2019, the University introduced the Become Rewarded Scholarships in the expectation of attracting high-achieving school-leavers to study full-time, on-campus whilst engaging as citizens of the University through the USQ Student Ambassador Program. Due to the success of this initiative in 2019, the Become Rewarded Scholarships were offered again in 2020. Year 12 students, who put USQ as their first preference on their QTAC application and achieve the required ATAR, are automatically offered a Become Rewarded Scholarship. Students who receive an ATAR rank between 84 and 97 or above, will receive one of the three scholarships: Chancellor's Excellence Scholarship, Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship, and the Executive Dean's Scholarship, valued from $6 000–$29 000.

USQ YEAR 11 SCHOLARSHIPS

The USQ Year 11 scholarships were offered to high school students studying a VET Certificate III during Year 11 to support their education through Year 12, who were not studying towards an ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank). This scholarship is funded through USQ's Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) to inspire students who may wish to continue into higher education.

RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

The USQ Residential College scholarships contribute towards accommodation costs at the University's Residential Colleges for regional and rural commencing and continuing full-time undergraduate students experiencing financial hardship. Benefits include enhanced accessibility to attend academic activities, College support through the academic assistance program, pastoral care and wellbeing support, and access to learning communities and engagement activities.

Destination Australia Program

The *Destination Australia Program 2020* is an important initiative to support regional university campuses and to encourage students to experience the rewards of living and studying in regional Australia. Having been awarded $792 000 in funding via the Program, initially for 20 one-year and 14 two-year scholarships and associated marketing, promotional and administration funding, USQ received approval for the conversion of 18 one-year to nine two-year scholarships. The 25 scholarships supported 13 domestic and 12 international scholarships in 2020 for students enrolled in a range of programs at USQ Toowoomba, and associated marketing, promotional and administration expenses.

USQ was successful in securing $874,500 in funding via the Destination Australia Program 2021. The funding will support 21 scholarships including 17 domestic and 4 international scholarships for students enrolling in a range of programs at USQ Toowoomba, and associated marketing, promotion and administration funding.

Provision of Higher Education to students who are incarcerated

Since 2012, the University has enrolled over 5 000 incarcerated students in more than 12 000 courses. The Incarcerated Student offline program now delivers five programs with 52 courses to jurisdictions in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory. The implementation of the Incarcerated Student Strategy ensures that USQ maintains its status as a leading national and international provider of higher education in prisons. This strategy provided high-quality teaching and learning experiences with appropriate support mechanisms, and has resulted in increased success and progression rates for these students.

2020 Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program Funding

The University's Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) 2020 allocation of $4 871 043 committed significant funds to programs to raise aspiration, widen participation, ensure access, and improve retention and success for domestic undergraduate students from low socio-economic backgrounds. USQ's strategy and key initiatives set out our *2020 Access and Participation Plan*, which aimed to assist current and future students to become connected and stay connected to higher education throughout their student lifecycle, and in their life-long education journey. By investing in programs that aimed to reduce or remove the barriers faced by students, we provided them with the opportunity to pursue their higher education ambition.

Beyond Year 10 Camp

The Beyond Year 10 Camp is run annually through Making Career Choices (MCC), a Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)-funded program. It is aimed at Year 10 students from rural and remote schools to raise their aspirations for higher education, to broaden their knowledge of jobs, and to give them information about pathways. As a result of COVID-19, the usual on-campus experience had to be cancelled. The MCC team made the decision to trial a virtual version, and the 2020 Virtual Beyond Year 10 Camp ran over three days in July. There were 152 participants across 10 schools involved in the online pilot.

Excellence in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander education

Reconciliation Action Plan

Reconciliation Australia formally endorsed USQ's new, innovative *Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)* in January 2020. The RAP contains 16 actions related to the areas of relationships, respect, opportunities, and governance. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic response and recovery, there have been some great achievements. RAP working group members have commenced internal socialisation of the RAP, virtually attending work area meetings throughout the University to promote the RAP and raise awareness around reconciliation.

For National Reconciliation Week, USQ rose to the challenge of celebrating events in this new environment. A video was developed titled *Create your story. Be part of the USQ journey*. USQ staff were also invited to take part in a video project highlighting the theme 'In This Together', which was recorded via Zoom and shared over USQ social media. Students and staff were invited to participate in an individual 2 000-step walk on the Traditional Lands on which they live, work and study. Those participating in the event were encouraged to upload photos to social media along with a statement acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the country on which they stand. Finally, a USQ Salon was held on *Challenging dominant University paradigms through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing*. The RAP working group continue implementation of the RAP while navigating the challenges of the current environment.

International education program: connecting Queensland to the world

Responding to the first of the 10 key priorities identified in the *USQ International Strategy 2020–2024*, developed in 2019, USQ International (USQI) appointed two new Directors: Dr Graham Wise as Director, International Marketing, Admissions and Business Development; and Ms Guie Hartney as Director, International Relations and Global Partnerships. With these new positions, USQI has been strengthened to achieve international success, considering strategic partnership development for purpose, intent and action, and through targeted market development for the recruitment of international students.

International education across the world in 2020 was defined by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international travel and on-campus teaching. International student numbers and income at all universities in Australia were severely impacted, resulting in unprecedented budget shortfalls at some institutions. Throughout this major industry disruption, USQI has worked positively and proactively to position USQ competitively in the international market. Building on USQ's existing strength in the delivery of online education, in partnership with the University Executive, USQI championed the establishment and implementation of accommodation and retention scholarships. Importantly, USQI has led the University's agile response to rapid market changes in international education, altering admissions procedures to assist students to join USQ while Australian borders and university campuses remained closed. USQ's international student recruitment performance during 2020 compares favourably with other Australian universities, demonstrating the success of our approach and commitment in managing international education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As USQ is coming to terms with the impact of COVID-19 and preparing for the post-pandemic era, we are evaluating new initiatives in all areas, including international academic partnerships, research partnerships, and off-shore and on-shore recruitment of international students. We are now marketing USQ as a *Research Intensive Regional University*. USQ's growing research excellence is a cornerstone for defining our market position based on who we are and how we perform. Such international education messaging targets the desires of international students to enjoy a unique student experience through high-quality education, whilst also attracting quality research collaborators.

Product development has also been a key focus in 2020. USQI has been working with the Academic Division to support the review of existing programs and the development of new ones to ensure our programs align with international market demand around program content, structure and delivery mode in order to remain relevant and competitive.

We are dedicated to support international students to succeed and ensure their journey is easy and enjoyable. A substantial number of international students benefited from the University's COVID-19 Student Support Package, which offered financial, academic and technology support to students experiencing hardship due to COVID-19. We are committed to provide a safe, welcoming environment to our international students and creating a culture that values diversity.

Attracting the best and brightest

Established in 2020 and continuing into 2021, USQ has a 25% fee reduction international student scholarship to attract the best and brightest students during times of global economic turmoil and financial hardship. The scholarship aims to position USQ competitively within an increasingly congested market.

Complementing USQ's internally awarded scholarships, 12 international students were awarded Destination Australia scholarships to support their on-campus studies at USQ Toowoomba, fully expending all available scholarships via this program. Students originated from seven countries to study in postgraduate programs across the study areas of Information Technology, Engineering and Health.

Managing markets and partners

A key challenge for USQ's international success and a key element of USQI's overarching strategic framework has been to identify, assess and target student markets. Historically, the majority of USQ international students are from South Asia. The appointment of new International Business Managers or In-Country Managers in 2020 for South-East Asia, Latin America, and Pakistan, to complement our existing team across Greater China, South Asia and Oceania, has positioned USQ to strengthen its international success through diversification of its source markets. Such a strategy provides broader overall market access while also protecting against region-specific market fluctuations.

Global partnerships are also a core component of the *USQ International Strategy 2020–2024*, enabling student recruitment through third-party education agreements, articulation and dual-award arrangements, executive training, academic study tour programs, and semester study abroad programs, all of which can be offered in on-campus and online modalities, affording flexibility for partners and students. The success of the USQ Upskill pilot courses, offered free of charge in partnership with FutureLearn, has led the way for us to evaluate the viability of offering fee-paying Upskill courses and full-degree courses on the FutureLearn Platform.

Following the redevelopment and improvement of partnership management processes, policies and procedures, 2020 saw the inaugural launch of the USQ Partners and Agents Summit, which brought together 18 education agents and institutional partners to broaden their knowledge of USQ, and to provide a networking platform for USQ staff to share and identify areas for collaboration. The workshop facilitated new articulation

agreements with partners in India, and facilitated student mobility, joint research and online program discussions with institutions in Thailand, Mexico, Sri Lanka, China, and Vietnam.

Another key initiative in 2020 was the launch of USQ's International Cotutelle program, developed by USQ International in partnership with the Graduate Research School and Faculties. The proposed Cotutelle programs involve joint supervision of Doctor of Philosophy students and will act as an enabler for deep and continuing partnerships with research-intensive institutions across the world that align with, and complement, USQ's research strengths.

Internationalisation of the student experience

The internationalisation of the USQ student experience is core to the University's vision to become a world-leading university. The integration of Student Mobility and Global Learning Programs into a Global Education Programs team has enabled the development of inbound and outbound programs, including virtual mobility experiences, to reinforce the University's commitment to the internationalisation of the student experience in spite of the COVID-19 travel restrictions, and to highlight USQ's agility and expertise in online learning and teaching.

2020 has seen intense activity from USQ International and other business units of the University to improve the platforms that underpin efficient student recruitment and admissions. The Omega international student admissions system was upgraded for more efficient data entry, automated communication, management of exceptions, quality control and reporting. Reporting processes were made more transparent, and the QContracts system for management of international education agents was customised to improve automation of basic functions.

Responsible internationalisation

USQ recognises the need to responsibly conduct its international educational function. Strict admissions standards apply for all international students. Transparency during the admissions process is supported by Genuine Temporary Entrant assessment of all international student applications prior to issuing offers to enrol. Student quality is supported by strict assessment of academic performance and minimum English-language standards. As a values-driven organisation, USQ is conscious of its duty of care to all students and to ensuring that students have a positive learning journey at USQ, to reap the full range of benefits that internationalisation provides.

During 2020, USQI completed a comprehensive business process improvement program in response to a planned schedule of audits, aimed to ensure business integrity and efficiency. Business improvements focused on admissions processes, management of agents and engagement with education partners. As a result of these process improvements, not only has USQI ensured the responsible and ethical operation of its international education function, but it has also improved the efficiency of admitting international students into USQ programs, and mitigated risk across diverse source countries.

USQI continues to create opportunities to provide mutual benefit to source countries of international students. This is achieved through maintaining an engaged international alumni network. USQ currently has a global network of over 106 000 alumni in more than 140 countries, and through the University's core activities of teaching and research. For example, USQ researchers from the Centre for Applied Climate Sciences are developing seasonal climate forecasting and innovative insurance solutions to climate risk management in the agriculture sector in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. The Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Systems is working in collaboration with partners in Latin America to assess how crop-livestock practices impact farm performance regionally, and how to evaluate the drivers of yield variability for forage cropping and pastoral systems in Argentina, Uruguay and Australia.

Disability enrolments

The *USQ Disability Action Plan 2017–2020* outlines actions and goals that enable and empower staff and students to reach their full potential, and complements the University's vision of an inclusive and diverse institution that drives innovation and inspires and empowers our staff and students. Enrolments of students with disabilities, and the number of students registered and accessing support through Student Equity, continues to increase. In Semester 2, 2020 post-census date, there were 1,020 students who had either indicated that they are impacted by a disability at enrolment or have gone on to register for support. From this group, there are 596 students currently receiving support through Student Equity. The team is engaged in contacting students with a disability, who have failing grades, in a proactive measure to support improving participation, success and retention. This strategy ensures students are linked with appropriate support services within the broader university community. USQ continues to contribute to breaking down barriers and working together towards creating a fully inclusive and accessible environment at USQ.

Objective 2: leadership in quality of the student experience

USQ's commitment to, and strategy for, enhancing the student experience are articulated in the *Academic Plan 2019–2022* and the *Student Success and Retention Strategy 2019–2021*. A key focus of these is strengthening quality and excellence in the student experience and enhancing student success by unifying USQ in a whole-of-University commitment to student success.

Supporting students through the COVID-19 pandemic

2020 was characterised by significant challenges for the higher education system in Australia, due to COVID-19. The University's experience as an external and online higher education provider meant the University was relatively well-prepared to implement a range of measures in response to the Government's requirements to arrest the spread and impact of COVID-19, and the University implemented a number of changes to support students' continued study success and to keep them and their networks of family and friends as safe as possible.

The transition to wholly online learning, teaching and support practices in Semester 1 was also eased, as about two-thirds of our students were already studying and being supported online. Nevertheless, a range of adjustments to learning and teaching practice and policy were required, the most significant included:

- introducing a uniform and more flexible approach to processing requests for assignment extension
- introducing new final grades for students impacted by COVID-19 circumstances
- deferring mandatory face-to-face courses (e.g. residential schools) or components of courses (labs, workshops, studios)
- converting paper-based exams to alternative forms of assessment.

The University is committed to ensuring that any changes made during this time that result in more efficient and effective practices, are pedagogically sound and promote positive student learning outcomes that are sustained into the future.

COVID-19 Financial Assistance Scheme

In 2020, the University developed the COVID-19 Student Support Package that included academic and financial support for USQ students during COVID-19. Through the COVID-19 Student Financial Assistance Fund, three financial support packages were provided for students. This included a living expenses package worth up to $3 000, a technology support package worth up to $1 000, and a learning resources package worth up to $500. This resulted in financial support of more than $2.35 million going to over 1,400 students, as well as the provision of 178 computers to students who would otherwise have used on-campus computer laboratories.

Academic support measures for students during the COVID-19 pandemic

To help support student success during the COVID-19 pandemic, students were given the option not to include their 2020 results in the calculation of their grade point average (GPA), meaning:

- if students did not pass a course in Semesters 1, 2 and/or 3, the fail grade did not impact their grade point average
- if students passed a course but did not achieve their usual high grade, they were able to elect to have the grade recorded as an ungraded passing grade, which did not impact on their grade point average.

More responsive approaches to assignment extensions were made available via an online Assignment Extension Request Form. Changes were made to several academic procedures and schedules to accommodate these measures

Residential Colleges' services during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students were encouraged to vacate USQ Residential Colleges, where possible. Residents who left were provided with a $500 Relocation Grant to help with any travel expenses and could apply for an additional $500 if their expenses exceeded this amount. Residents were released from their contracts and refunded any money paid in advance for accommodation. Residents who remained on-campus were relocated to ensuite bathrooms and were provided three meals a day at no additional cost, to reduce the use of shared common spaces. From sending out care packs, to having a dedicated College Wellness Educator available to chat with students virtually, the Residential Colleges pivoted their services to offer them in a new way.

Student assessment of the quality of educational experience

The Student Experience Survey (2019) is completed by currently enrolled commencing and later-year students, measuring teaching and learning outcomes. The 2019 survey results, when compared to 2017 results, indicate positive increases in satisfaction rates across all six major indicators both at undergraduate and postgraduate coursework levels of study.

Undergraduate student satisfaction ratings across all indicators have improved since 2017. Quality of entire educational experience results indicate 76% of students reported positively in 2019. Satisfaction rates for the majority of clusters have remained stable on the previous year.

Since 2017, all indicators of student satisfaction for postgraduate coursework students have shown improvement. Quality of entire educational experience results indicate 82% of students reported positively in 2019.

Student feedback

In March 2020, as part of the implementation of the Academic Quality Framework, the University implemented a University-wide pilot of mid-semester survey across weeks 4-5 and an end-semester survey across week 13 to end examination period. Thirty-three per cent of students engaged with the surveys and provided feedback between March and September. The feedback that students provide through their comments is invaluable in understanding the context, concerns and the quality of their learning experience. Students are eager to provide comments and they also tend to include solutions in their feedback. Qualitative coding of student comments in Semester 1 by an experienced qualitative analyst was undertaken at both the mid-semester and end-semester points and will be used to further refine improvement activities and *USQ Academic Plan* initiatives, such as the first-year experience. A business specification was provided to ICT Services for an enhanced student survey platform, and a functional specification is currently in development.

Strategy

USQ Academic Plan

The first four *USQ Academic Plan* strategies identified for implementation in 2020 were:

1. curriculum models and program reform
2. strengthening the first-year experience
3. enhancing graduate employability
4. student success advising mediated through first and later-year curriculum, co-curricular activities and practice reform.

These strategies required the bringing together of discipline knowledge and skills and support for learning practices to foster student engagement and improve student outcomes, and are being operationalised within a suite of more than 20 priority programs.

The curriculum models and program reform is a necessary prelude to curriculum transformation. Large-scale curriculum reform is required to create lean programs with fewer courses which therefore place less demand on resources associated with the current approach to program structuring. Efficient and effective program structures will free up resources, particularly associated with low-enrolment courses, and will allow the creation and offer of new programs to attract new cohorts of students (transformation).

Attention to the first-year experience and proactive student success advising are required to promote the retention of commencing and continuing students, while the focus on employability as a graduate outcome is essential to USQ's identity, aligns with the Government's performance-based funding (introduced in 2019) and recent changes proposed in the Job-Ready Graduates Bill. All four strategies require large-scale program redesign with proposals to be quality assured by Faculty and University Academic Program Committees, submitted for consideration by the Academic Board and approved by the Vice-Chancellor. Resources for this work, including the Dean (Academic Transformation), School-based First Year Experience and Employability Leads, and Project and Support Officer positions, were appointed in 2020.

Optimising the student experience

Integrated services model – iconnect

USQ's new student support initiative, iconnect, launched in Toowoomba on 10 February 2020, offering students access to USQ services and support from one central location. The collaborative and digitally supported space, designed in partnership with students, will constantly evolve in response to student feedback. The iconnect space is temporarily located in the Refectory at USQ Toowoomba while the permanent site is being built, and is in the process of being rolled out to the Ipswich and Springfield campuses.

To support students studying externally and online at USQ, iconnect transitioned to an online offering at the end of March. The online audio and web conferencing platform, Zoom, was used to create a robust service to simulate the physical space and give students the opportunity to virtually speak face-to-face with the iconnect support team. In April, USQ's Live Chat functionality was expanded across additional USQ website pages to increase access opportunities. To complement iconnect's digital offering and appeal to a niche student audience, the USQ iconnect Facebook Group was created to encourage students to interact with their peers, share study advice and positively support others. Since its inception at the end of March 2020, the group has rapidly grown into a nurturing online community and engaging iconnect support space for students.

Promoting students as partners, USQ students have been employed as concierges, providing the first tier of support. To assist iconnect in delivering a seamless experience to students, additional supporting tiers within the University have committed resources to work with our concierges. This commitment to student support from across the University has been a key factor in providing a genuine single point of contact and has contributed to the success of the model to date.

Academic Intervention Monitoring System

Building on the achievements of 2019, the Academic Intervention Monitoring System (AIMS II) is being expanded to a University-wide approach to support learning throughout the entire student lifecycle. One of the critical areas of focus has been to establish a network of support to centrally connect students to the right service at the right time. Commencing in Semester 2, 2020, students in need of academic assistance were referred to a discipline-specific learning and development expert, to develop tailored strategies and guidance for growth. This integrated approach to proactive support will continue to align learning and teaching services with student experience support, seamlessly connecting students in a coordinated and meaningful way.

Adopting a student life-cycle approach, all commencing undergraduate students are welcomed to their program by a student peer. Starting in Semester 1, 2020, discipline-specific student peers connected with new students to have early conversations about expectations of study and share study tips and resources before the start of the semester. This popular activity has been well received by students and successful in forming a new sense of belonging and self-confidence. Work continues throughout 2020 and beyond to know our students better and connect them to timely and relevant support for learning.

Participation in RUN academic advising pilot

Student success and retention in regional and rural universities is significantly more challenging than in metropolitan universities. A Regional Universities Network (RUN) initiative to investigate, implement and evaluate the impact of a pilot program of Academic Tutoring/Student Success advising has been commenced, and USQ is participating in the pilot. The RUN project is sponsored by the RUN Vice-Chancellors and participating universities, and is being led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) Professor Josh Pienaar and is overseen for the RUN DVC(A) Group by USQ's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Karen Nelson. The project draws on previous RUN collaborations to enhance student success and the sector-leading work exemplified in Emily McIntosh's book, *Student Success Advising – The Six Pillars (2019)* and has six pillars of activity that will be translated into pilot projects in the RUN universities, taking into account the unique context of each of the RUN universities. The approach adopts an affirmative approach and integrates learning analytics, professional support services, student advisors, and academic tutors in a single holistic student support framework with clearly defined processes and pathways for supporting students to be successful in their studies.

Online examinations pilot

USQ has undertaken three small trials with the proctoring service, ProctorU, in the past 12 months. The pilot has explored the service as a potential opportunity to offer greater flexibility to USQ's predominantly online student body. Phase one of the pilot took place in February and allowed consenting staff and students to trial the service whilst completing a mock exam. Phase two of the pilot was undertaken in June and August. The pilot consisted of two courses with 20 students consenting to trial the service while completing their online assessment. The findings of this project will be used to inform USQ's approach to online invigilation in 2021.

Student leadership development

Due to the circumstances surrounding COVID-19, USQ's efforts focused on the online delivery of the *Learn to Lead* student development program. A variety of workshops and masterclasses, presented by expert practitioners and consultants, were available to our students on topics such as:

- The neuroscience of leadership
- How to build confidence and inspire others
- Time management
- Presentation skills
- Resilience
- Managing change
- Overcoming adversity to achieve your goals.

Steele Rudd refurbishment

In early-2020, USQ Residential Colleges were excited to reveal the complete refurbishment of the Steele Rudd College outer blocks. The multi-million-dollar project has seen 70 bedrooms transformed, with fresh living spaces and self-catering kitchens featuring new appliances and storage lockers. Air-conditioning was installed in all bedrooms and common spaces with the bathrooms completely replaced, transforming the facility into a living-learning space that was co-designed by our students. The refurbished facility continued to operate during 2020 under an industry-approved COVIDSafe plan.

Reimagining the USQ Academic Calendar

In June, the University commenced an 18-month project to reimagine the USQ Academic Calendar for adoption of a new Academic Calendar by Semester 1, 2022. The intended goal is to increase flexibility by way of expanded study options for USQ students to complete their program of study in the most efficient and affordable means possible, including the option to accelerate program completion via the facility to complete more courses in a shorter timeframe as might be afforded, with an equitable length/increased course offering trimester-based system, for example.

Health and wellness

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the USQ Health Service remained open to students in Toowoomba and the community to support our community's health needs. This flu season, 714 staff received a free flu vaccination across all three campuses. The Health and Wellness team provided online student wellness webinars, online coffee chats and regular mindfulness sessions to support students in their transition to online study. Mental Health First Aid programs moved to an online format to ensure ongoing training of students in recognising, responding to, and supporting peers who are experiencing mental illness.

Multi-faith services

Multi-faith services continued to expand in 2020 and pivoted online during the pandemic. This year, the new multi-faith centre was opened, showcasing the new Islamic prayer facilities and Peace Room to accommodate a wide range of faith-based services. Our Chaplain Coordinator offered online sessions for students as a new way of offering spiritual connection.

Respect. Now. Always.

The Respect. Now. Always. (R.N.A.) initiative aims to prevent and address sexual assault and sexual harassment in university communities. USQ has focused on raising the awareness of sexual assault and harassment, on-campus and online; promoting healthy relationships and consent; by-stander intervention; and responding to disclosures of sexual assault. Initiatives included:

- three major awareness campaigns to students throughout the year: *Recognise, Respond and Refer; What Does Support Sound like?; Report Any Incident*
- compulsory completion of the online R.N.A. learning module for all students in USQ Residential Colleges
- the training of Health and Wellness staff members to deliver by-stander awareness training to students to teach them how to assist people who experience sexual assault and/or sexual harassment
- the development, in consultation with Staff, students and external experts, of a stand-alone staff and student policy and set of procedures for Staff and students in managing sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Engagement with potential and current student communities

Strengthening relationships with potential and current student communities in USQ's footprint was a key area of focus in 2020. A new senior leadership position of Executive Director (Strategic Liaison Education Community) was created in March. The position is responsible for taking the lead in developing and leveraging strong relationships between the University and its potential and current student communities and key stakeholders, with a focus on the University's strategic relationships with schools, regional university centres, the profile of its Residential Colleges, and relationships with the USQ Student Guild.

Open Day, 2020-style

As the University's largest recruitment event, Open Day aims to showcase all that USQ has to offer, and demonstrate to prospective students and their influencers, that USQ is the number-one choice in the region. The ongoing COVID-19

pandemic and associated Government restrictions significantly impacted how universities can engage with prospective students. The first USQ Virtual Open Day was successfully conducted in a virtual format on 5 September, providing opportunities to embrace innovative ways to showcase the University through virtual engagement with our local communities and industry stakeholders and a wider audience than ever before beyond a single-day event. The Virtual Open Day used the Good Education Platform with prospective students able to chat with academics, support staff and current students, as well as providing access to live webinars and 360 Virtual Tours. Visitors on the day were able to trial USQ's StudyDesk to get a feel of online study with access to tasks and information. USQ's senior executives and the Mayor of each region provided welcoming messages for use throughout the platform. Virtual Open Day achieved a 21% increase in registrations in comparison to the previous year's physical events.

Online orientation

Owing to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, the Semester 2, 2020 Orientation was facilitated online from 6 to 10 July, with several new online initiatives implemented to assist students in establishing relationships and building a sense of belonging, which are key precursors of retention. Positive feedback has been received from students via the evaluation forms, with 92% of respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing that all sessions were beneficial and engaging, while also providing relevant information to assist in their transition into University.

Ensuring high-quality academic programs

Program portfolio

One of the core pillars of the *Academic Plan 2019–2022* is quality and excellence in USQ's program portfolio. In line with this, a key focus in 2020 and beyond is to transform and diversify our academic product, including traditional undergraduate and postgraduate programs, innovative education offerings, and structured pathways to USQ for domestic and international students at all levels.

Specific priorities across our program offerings, and approach to learning and teaching throughout 2020 have included:

- strengthening our first-year experience, which includes both curriculum changes and our support for commencing students, including students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as proactive academic advising
- implementing an employability strategy to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop their enterprise skills and participate in relevant industry-strength learning opportunities as a part of their degree studies.

Growth in online education

The University's ambitions for growth in online education and its ability to respond to the immediate needs for community upskilling or reskilling in an economic recession continue to be demonstrated via the strong interest in offerings, including:

- free UpSkill mini-courses, offered in April, to support those in the community seeking to build their skills and develop their knowledge during the COVID-19 pandemic, which attracted 1 468 enrolments in 2020. The offer allowed community members to select one of five free mini-courses which specifically address issues and recovery.
- two USQ UpSkill courses, offered free of charge on the FutureLearn Platform, as pilot courses as part of Austrade's global marketing efforts to support the education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, which attracted 42 217 enrolments in 2020. FutureLearn.com is a private company jointly owned by the United Kingdom's Open University and the SEEK Group. Fifteen key markets were identified by FutureLearn, and they conducted paid marketing to promote this initiative.
- USQ's suite of 20 six-month online undergraduate and postgraduate certificate programs, developed in response to the Federal Government's COVID-19 Higher Education Relief Package, which attracted an enrolment of 264 students, or 106.875 equivalent full-time students (EFSTL) for Semester 2. The suite of short programs, discounted for students in Semester 2, 2020 as part of the Government package, consists of four subjects studied over one semester, and are available across a range of disciplines, including Health, IT, Engineering, Education, and Agriculture. Completing students will receive a USQ qualification and credit towards a full undergraduate or postgraduate degree. The programs include:
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Information Technology Business Analysis
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Computing/Information Technology
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Information Systems
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Information Technology
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Information Technology Team Management
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Spatial Science Fundamentals
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Engineering Fundamentals
  - Undergraduate Certificate of STEM Foundations
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Psychology Fundamentals
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Child and Family Studies
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Teaching (Early Childhood Education)
  - Undergraduate Certificate of Teaching (Primary)

- Undergraduate Certificate of Teaching (Secondary)
- Graduate Certificate of Science for Primary/Middle School Teaching
- Graduate Certificate of Education (TESOL)
- Graduate Certificate of Education (Special Education)
- Graduate Certificate of Education (Guidance and Counselling)
- Graduate Certificate of Health Clinical Education
- Graduate Certificate of Nursing Scheduled Medicines
- Graduate Certificate of Agricultural Futures.

Program revitalisation

The revitalisation of program offerings at the undergraduate level included the following new or substantially revitalised programs, which commenced in 2020:

- The separation of the previous multi-specialisation Bachelor of Education program into three separate programs, including the Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), Bachelor of Education (Primary), and Bachelor of Education Secondary (from Semester 1).
- Diploma of Wine (from Semester 1) – this is the only undergraduate diploma of its kind currently offered in Australia. The qualification combines elements of the USQ Wine Science degree with the Queensland College of Wine Tourism's Practical Viticulture Workshops and elements of the Wine Industry Operations certificates.

Innovative new or substantially revised postgraduate programs which commenced in 2020 included the:

- Graduate Certificate of Engineering Practice (from Semester 2)
- Master of Editing and Publishing (from Semester 1)
- Master of Adaptive Leadership (from Semester 1)
- Master of Information Systems (from Semester 1)
- Master of Data Science (from Semester 1)
- Master of Clinical Psychology – Advanced Entry (from Semester 1) – this program provides the first opportunity in Australia for generally registered psychologists to pursue a training program that leads to specialist registration in an Area of Practice Endorsement in Clinical Psychology, whilst recognising their existing qualification.

The non-award Academic Communication Skills Program also commenced from Semester 1.

New majors and specialisations for 2020 included:

- Professional Photography major within the Bachelor of Communication and Media (from Semester 1)
- Animal Science and Statistics majors within the Bachelor of Science (from Semesters 1 and 2 respectively)
- Industrial Technology and Design Specialisation within the Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (from Semester 1).

USQ's Aviation programs are now offered at the Toowoomba and Springfield campuses, with the expansion of the programs to USQ Toowoomba effective from 2020. With the recently installed Airbus 320 simulator located at the Toowoomba campus, and the Boeing 737 simulator based at Springfield, USQ is the only university in the country to house both an Airbus and Boeing simulator, and offer simulated flying experience in the first year of study, providing an unrivalled education experience for Aviation students. Students also have the opportunity to train with the prestigious Qantas Group Training Academy located at Toowoomba Wellcamp Airport.

Further new or substantially revitalised program offerings for 2021 include the following:

- A suite of seven new Creative Arts-named degrees that will be delivered from Semester 1, 2021 and will replace the current multi-discipline single degree of the Bachelor of Creative Arts. Designed to inspire creativity, this innovative suite of programs will allow students to develop technical expertise and gain practical experience under the guidance of our experienced industry professionals. With seven new Creative Arts degrees to choose from, students can follow their passion in a flexible and supportive environment. The degrees are:
  - Bachelor of Theatre
  - Bachelor of Design and Interactive Technologies
  - Bachelor of Film and Screen Production
  - Bachelor of Creative Arts and Community Wellbeing
  - Bachelor of Music
  - Bachelor of Visual Art
  - Bachelor of Television and Radio.
- In addition to being offered at USQ Toowoomba and online, the Bachelor of Laws will be offered at USQ Ipswich from 2021. Students currently enrolled in the degree at USQ Springfield will be able to finish their studies at either campus. The move from USQ Springfield to USQ Ipswich will enable the University to expand its student numbers in Law, and provides an ideal location for industry experience, with the Ipswich courts being one of the largest Queensland court complexes outside of Brisbane. Staff from the School of Law and Justice, currently based at USQ Springfield, will relocate to Grace House at USQ Ipswich, which is a heritage-listed building that will be renovated to include a moot court, offices, meeting rooms and a law library collection.
- The University's Master of Business Administration has been redesigned for offer in block mode from 2021, with the courses offered in eight-week blocks, six times per

year. This will be the first program in the University to be delivered in block mode. A Graduate Certificate of Business Administration and the Graduate Diploma of Business Administration will also be offered from Semester 1, 2021.

- Building on the existing program offerings in the area of Allied Health, a suite of postgraduate programs in public health, including a Master of Public Health, Graduate Diploma of Public Health and a Graduate Certificate of Public Health, has been developed for delivery from Semester 1, 2021. Leveraging the critical mass of academics with expertise in this area, and drawing on the University's strong partnerships with our regional hospital and health services, who have their own strategic imperatives to grow research, these degrees have been designed to create highly employable graduates as career opportunities in public health grow in response to communities striving to address complex, systemic health issues.
- Following on from the separation of the Bachelor of Education into three separate degrees in 2020, from Semester 1, 2021, the existing single Master of Learning and Teaching will be separated to cater for the offering of a:
  - Master of Learning and Teaching (Early Years)
  - Master of Learning and Teaching (Primary)
  - Master of Learning and Teaching (Secondary)
- USQ is in the process of revitalising all discipline majors for both the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Communication and Media and will be introduced in 2021. The revitalised majors will more explicitly embed strategies to enhance students' learning experiences and employability and professional identity so that students are able to demonstrate their industry-ready capabilities on graduation.
- The Criminology and Criminal Justice Major and the Criminology and Criminal Justice Extended Major within the Bachelor of Arts from Semester 1, 2021.

Micro-credentialing

With changing employment opportunities and work requirements, professionals require just-in-time learning that enables them to focus on targeted, specific skill sets to support workplace productivity and excellence. An exciting initiative, which commenced in 2019, USQ now offers a suite of online UpSkill mini-courses, with each mini-course comprising approximately 40 hours of learning over four weeks. We currently have 38 mini-courses on offer in the fields of marketing and communication, management, business, education, leadership, transport, cybersecurity and entrepreneurship – with plans to further expand these offerings.

Students can now complete the Graduate Certificate of Business through USQ's UpSkill mini-courses, which provides greater enrolment flexibility. The Graduate Certificate of Business comprises of 16 mini-courses, equivalent to four full credit point courses. Students who successfully complete the assessment for each mini-course, will be issued with a badge. To be eligible to graduate with the full Graduate Certificate of Business, students must apply and meet all entry requirements, after which time all successfully completed mini-courses will count towards their degree.

Leveraging the success of USQ UpSkill, the *Micro-credential Strategy*, developed in 2020, is designed to provide the framework for the University's success in the delivery of short courses offered in block (e.g. USQ UpSkill), intensive and stackable modes and professional development short courses that result in a recognised USQ badge and/or certificate of completion. The Strategy reflects the need for the University to develop new capability using innovative approaches, and to limit the risks of establishing a new structure alongside the existing structure which could compete with the University's current offerings.

Improved structures and processes

Minimum requirements for online teaching and learning

The StudyDesk Consistency Project, which commenced mid-2018, aimed to provide a dependable student experience with courses and learning, thus contributing to improvements in student success and retention by removing barriers to participation and engagement. Building on this project, a set of 11 minimum requirements for online teaching and learning was developed for implementation in all courses in Semester 2. These minimum requirements are the minimum expectations for the online teaching environment at USQ, and are intended to enhance the quality of online learning and the student experience. Implementation of the requirements were led by School Learning, Teaching and Student Success Committees, and the Office for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (OALT) provided support and resources for implementation of the minimum requirements.

Academic Quality Framework

Underpinning a quality-assured, innovative and well-managed portfolio of traditional and contemporary curriculum offerings that meet student, industry and community needs, and which communicates and reinforces USQ's reputation as a high-quality education provider, is the development and establishment of a comprehensive system of academic quality processes that involve school, faculty, and university academic quality committees, and academic and corporate governance. Current

practice will be extended to systematically make available and use data and evidence to improve academic quality and student outcomes. Central to this is the implementation of the *Academic Quality Framework* which will embed responsibility for the quality of course and program performance in USQ's Schools and Faculties, and will contribute to ensuring enhancement actions are regularly reviewed and monitored to improve performance against internal and external benchmarks for academic quality and student performance outcomes. This project is two-thirds through the three-year timeline for the staged approach for its implementation.

Academic policies and procedures

In 2019, Council delegated approval authority for Academic Quality policies to the Academic Board and mandated consultation points with Academic Board and its standing committees for all University procedures subordinate to Academic Quality policies. This has contributed to strengthening Academic Board's role in developing, monitoring and reviewing academic policies and their effectiveness, in line with the academic governance requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015*. Reviewing the effectiveness of delegations for academic governance is also undertaken within the context of the University's regular policy review cycle, including re-assignment of accountability and responsibility for the policy instrument, where required.

Finalisation of the new Assessment Policy suite, the Academic Integrity Policy suite and the Graduate Attributes Policy took place in 2020, and major reviews commenced relating to educational partnerships, credit and exemption, program accreditation and curriculum design. Work also continued in 2020 on developing a formal University policy on academic freedom and freedom of speech, drawing on the *Review of Freedom of Speech in Higher Education Providers* undertaken by the Hon Mr Robert French AC. USQ has committed to implementing the new policy by the end of 2020.

Academic integrity

A project is well underway to implement a comprehensive University-wide approach to academic integrity, to further develop responsive and proactive measures to address academic integrity matters, and reduce future breaches. The approach is guided by a project plan, which is aligned with the recently released TEQSA Academic Integrity Toolkit, and resources invested include an interim project officer, reassigning two professional staff positions into the Office for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching for the roles of Associate Director (Academic Integrity) and Academic Integrity Coordinator, and appointing school-based academic integrity leads (academic staff).

Load forecasting

In 2019, USQ identified the need to leverage the discipline expertise and insights of Heads of School/College and other key stakeholders as part of a systematic, evidence-based approach to load estimating, planning and reforecasting. The need for an expansion and redesign of the datasets to draw in more sector benchmarking, market factors and research, cohort analysis and student success data was also identified. These needs are being progressed via the Load Forecasting and Review Committee which is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and supported by the Academic and Enterprise Services Divisions.

In 2020, a Load Reporting, Analysis and Advice Working Group was established, with the Working Group reporting to the Load Forecasting and Review Committee. Chaired by the Director (Planning and Performance Support Services), the Working Group provides a formal and regular co-ordination point to review and improve the reporting, analysis and advice provided, and has responsibility for understanding the information required to support activities associated with load forecasting, planning and reviewing; and building the reporting and analysis capability to serve these business needs.

Reporting of student complaints and academic appeals

A report was submitted to USQ Council in July 2020 via the Academic Board, which represented full-year complaint comparisons for the years 2017 to 2019. In summary, 102 formal complaints were received and processed via the online complaints management system in 2019. A comparison across the three years of complaint outcomes demonstrates a decrease in the overall number of complaints from 2018 to 2019. Of the 102 formal complaints received in 2019, 31% were 'Resolved – sustained' and 55% were 'Resolved – not sustained', compared with 49% sustained and 38% not sustained in 2018, and 44% sustained and 45% not sustained in 2017.

At the completion of the investigation into a formal complaint, a user satisfaction survey is provided to the student who lodged the complaint. While completion rates are low, this feedback provides insights into potential continuous improvement avenues to enhance complaint resolution processes. Areas of focus arising from the 2019 feedback include improved communication to students regarding progress towards resolution of their complaint, and clarity of the reasons given for the complaint outcome.

A report on Academic Appeals was also submitted to Council in July 2020 via the Academic Board, with the report providing a full-year comparison of academic appeals from 2016 to 2019 inclusive. For the 2019 academic year, the number of academic appeals submitted decreased from the 2018 calendar year, by 31 cases. 67% of submissions were dismissed by the Academic Appeals Committee as having no grounds for appeal, and 8% were resolved internally. This compares to 57% of submissions dismissed in 2018 and 12% resolved internally.

Corrective actions for all appeal matters are part of the standard process and are tracked to ensure implementation. These include recommendations to Accountable Officers in relation to policy and procedural gaps, including from appeals that are not upheld or resolved internally. A review of the current USQ Student Complaints and Appeals policy suite is currently in progress to streamline the number of policy instruments and provide a holistic framework for the resolution of student grievances, including complaints.

Optimising academic staff performance

Scholarly supports for good practice in online teaching and learning

2020 has been a year of immense development of USQ curriculum, teaching, courses and programs. The context of this positive change was planned, through implementation of the *Academic Plan*, and unplanned (seen through the lens of opportunity) of COVID-19 online learning and online exam mobilisation, as well as the development of alternatives to exams. With all students and all courses suddenly pivoting online, USQ provided intensive supports to build the capacity of academics to make these changes in a quality manner.

On-boarding and annual refresher modules

USQ has strengthened its suite of mandatory on-boarding and annual refresher modules for all staff within the Academic Division (including casual educators). The professional development suite now includes a half-hour, assessed on-boarding module presenting the educational foundations of learning, teaching, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and Commonwealth regulatory, compliance and reporting requirements. The annual refresher modules address emergent good practice research findings, such as in the promotion of student academic integrity.

Academic Workload Model

Following a comprehensive review process in 2019, the revised Workload Model for Academic Division Academic Staff was successfully implemented from Semester 1, 2020. Working under the direction of the Workload Model Implementation Committee, a range of training and awareness sessions were delivered throughout 2020 for Academic Division employees.

Academic Employee Expectations Framework

In June, the *USQ Academic Employee Expectations Framework* was released for pilot implementation in 2020. The Framework, which has been informed by current practice within the Australian higher education sector and developed through multiple rounds of consultation, provides a practical and flexible guide to improve the clarity of expectations, contributions and achievements of academic employees, and supports the achievement of USQ's strategic goals.

Excellence Awards for Teaching

The Excellence Awards for Teaching recognise and reward employees who have created exceptional learning opportunities for students, and provided learning and teaching leadership for University colleagues.

Recipients of the Excellence Awards were:

- Excellence Award for Advancing Student Success: Associate Professor Suzanne Maloney (School of Commerce), Dr Megan Axelsen (University Strategic Projects), Dr Marita Basson (School of Civil Engineering and Surveying), Dr Alice Brown and Associate Professor Petrea Redmond (School of Education), Associate Professor Linda Galligan and Dr Joanna Turner (School of Sciences), Professor Jill Lawrence (School of Humanities and Communication)
- Excellence Award for School Teaching – Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts: Dr Chris Kossen and Andrew Mason (School of Humanities and Communication)
- Excellence Award for School Teaching – Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences: Dr Lisa Beccaria (School of Nursing and Midwifery)

In 2020, USQ also recognised and celebrated excellence in learning and teaching via the awarding of nine Excellence Awards for 'Theme' (formerly known as the USQ Strategic Priority Teaching and Learning Awards) and College Learning and Teaching Awards, as follows:

- Casual Teaching: Dr Anna Chruscik (School of Health and Wellbeing)
- Early Career Educator: Dr Raquel Peel (School of Psychology and Counselling)
- Employability in the Curriculum: Dr Anup Shrestha (School of Management and Enterprise)
- Online Learning Innovation: Student Online Engagement Team – Associate Professor Suzanne Maloney (School of Commerce), Dr Megan Axelsen (University Strategic Projects), Dr Marita Basson (School of Civil Engineering

and Surveying), Dr Alice Brown and Associate Professor Petrea Redmond (School of Education), Associate Professor Linda Galligan and Dr Joanna Turner (School of Sciences), Professor Jill Lawrence (School of Humanities and Communication)
- First Year Experience: Innovations in Trauma-Informed Pedagogy in the First Year Team – Associate Professor Jessica Gildersleeve (Lead) and Dr Kate Cantrell (School of Humanities and Communication) and Ms India Bryce (School of Education)
- Leadership of Learning and Teaching: Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) Program Leadership Team – Dr Jessica Marrington (Lead), Professor Andrea Lamont-Mills, Dr Carla Jeffries and Dr Nancey Hoare (School of Psychology and Counselling)
- USQ College Learning and Teaching Award: Dr Heejin Chang
- College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research Learning and Teaching Award: Ms Melanie Waters.

Learning and teaching grants

Via the Open Educational Practice Grants and the Grants for Embedded Learning and Teaching Strategies, which are designed to support leadership and approaches for improving students' educational experiences and/or graduate outcomes, five teams were awarded a combined total of $50 000 in grants in 2020 for delivering outcomes and impact for USQ's students, learning and teaching for:

- open textbooks
- the application of digital innovation to courses and programs
- increasing student engagement in the course experience (on-campus, online or blended)
- embedding employability and career perspectives in courses and programs.

Hub for Immersive and Virtual Experiences

Following the successful launch of the Hub for Immersive and Virtual Experiences (HIVE) in April 2019, the program went on to see over 500 staff and student participants, including a highly successful USQ Open Day exhibit. The USQ HIVE showcased at sector-wide events, including the cross-institutional learning design forum, the 2019 Australasian Engineering Educators Conference, a Department of Education-hosted Maths Educators Professional Development forum, and the 2020 #anewreality VR/AR forum, hosted by ACODE. There were 14 USQ staff who successfully completed an Australian-first Educators in Residence program offering a deep dive into emergent tools to support immersive and virtual learning and teaching approaches. Several of these graduates have gone on to implement immersive learning in their 2020 course delivery, and others have been successful in winning competitive grants to advance our expertise and scholarship in this innovative space. In 2020, there has been an ongoing focus on enmeshing virtual and immersive opportunities into courses and supporting academics to use these innovative approaches. Due to COVID-19, extensions have been granted to USQ and the HIVE to present at the 2021 Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) conference, and to complete an Engaging Sciences grant to showcase a 360-degree tour of the Mount Kent Observatory and highlight space science career opportunities. This latter grant will extend the HIVE and USQ Centre for Astrophysics to regional schools in 2021.

Objective 3: graduates who excel in the workplace and as leaders

A specific priority across the University's program offerings and approach to learning and teaching throughout 2020 has been the implementation of an employability strategy to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop their enterprise skills and participate in relevant industry-strength learning opportunities as a part of their degree studies.

As part of the employability strategy, USQ is in the process of defining a framework for Work-integrated Learning (WIL) that is inclusive of all programs, and sets expectations for WIL and the development of employability skills in all USQ programs. This will include an academic framework within which WIL sits, and adds value to the student experience, but also the complex suite of administrative supports required to effectively support WIL. Other activities in progress include development of WIL policy and procedures that are integrated with curriculum design and learning and teaching models.

Survey outcomes

A number of survey instruments are used within the higher education sector to gauge various aspects of student, employer and graduate experiences and outcomes. These, in turn, serve to inform continuous improvement activities across the University.

Good Universities Guide 2021

The *Good Universities Guide 2021* rankings were released on 17 August, with the University of Southern Queensland graduates again having the highest starting salary in Queensland at $67 400, and second nationally. Other highlights of the rankings include 89% of our postgraduate students finding full-time employment within four months of finishing their degrees, and our Engineering degrees ranking number one in Australia for both graduates in full-time

employment and median starting salary. Importantly, we also ranked first in Queensland, and second in Australia, for social equity and proportion of first-generation students studying at university level.

Graduate Outcomes Survey

The Graduate Outcomes Survey measures the short-term labour force outcomes achieved by graduates of Australian higher education institutions (approximately) four to six months post completion. All four Course Experience Quality indicators have remained stable in 2020: Overall Satisfaction (80.8%), Good Teaching (61.2%), Graduate Qualities (85.4%) and Generic Skills (80.4%) compared to the previous two and five year periods.

USQ continues to perform strongly in labour force indicators compared to the sector. USQ was the top-ranking university for domestic undergraduate full-time employment rate in 2020 and remains the top-ranking university for domestic undergraduate median full-time salary ($70,700) in 2020.

Employer Satisfaction Survey

The Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS) asks supervisors of graduates who participated in the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) to provide feedback about the generic skills, technical skills and work readiness of the graduate employed in their workplace. The results of the ESS provide a greatly reduced number of responses compared to the GOS and Student Experience Survey, thus caution is warranted in their interpretation.

The ESS Report released in January 2020 relates to students who completed their studies in 2019. In this report, employer satisfaction of USQ graduates demonstrated a 3% increase from 85% in 2019 to 88% in 2020, continuing a highly positive view of USQ graduates. In 2020 the lowest employer satisfaction ratings were 86% for Collaborative Skills and Employability. Two of the six indicators, Foundation Skills and Technical Skills rated 90% or above. Although some caution must be utilised with this data, when viewed in combination with the student GOS Labour Force Indicator outcomes, the employment related outcomes for USQ graduates is very positive.

Careers and employability

Ignition Project

This Student Amenities Fee-funded project provides all students with the opportunity to engage in programs that support the development of entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial attitudes, behaviours and skills. The focus this year has been on creating tools that all students can access, as well as programs and events that students can use to network with industry. The goal is to create resources that develop employability skills and business experience. Some of the opportunities in 2020 have included:

- semester-long Innovation Challenges to connect students to real-world issues
- Regionally Speaking, a podcast about regional entrepreneurship
- a fortnightly webinar series with the Alumni Office, featuring entrepreneurial alumni
- *Ignition magazine*, circulated in print and online
- the creation of an Innovation Toolkit, a self-guided resources hub.

Employer engagement

In 2020, USQ Careers and Employability responded to the unprecedented disruption to employment and labour markets. The Employer Engagement team doubled their efforts to connect USQ students with employment opportunities, in large part through twice-weekly Virtual Coffee Chats with employers throughout Semesters 1 and 2. Via more than 40 Virtual Coffee Chats, the Industry Mentoring Program and the Online Career Fair, USQ students have been connected with employers, who have shared details of their graduate employment or work experience opportunities and answered questions from students. In addition, the Employer Engagement team has been proactive in developing employer engagement initiatives in the academic curriculum, such as aligning the Queensland Law Society clerkship program with scaffolded careers and employability content in the law curriculum. Another example includes sourcing industry projects for computer science and business information systems students. USQ's employer engagement, through online programs and platforms, has been recognised as sector-leading, with team members being invited to share their expertise nationally and internationally.

USQ Industry Mentoring Program

This Student Amenities Fee-funded project allows students to connect with industry professionals to help prepare them for the transition from university to employment. This program aims to enhance students' knowledge, understanding and professional networks. The Program has 10 mentoring plans for the student or mentor to choose between, depending on their interest area. Each plan guides the participants through a 65-day mentoring program. A total of 119 mentoring connections were established across the year, with 71 mentors and 155 students.

Career Fair

Through this Student Amenities Fee-funded project, USQ hosts an online Career Fair where we connect employers to students and promote opportunities. To date, this project has been a success. The reputational benefits it has generated for USQ as being a forerunner in this sphere will continue to be a very positive point of difference to our competitors, and very timely in the unusual situation we currently find ourselves in, due to the global pandemic.

- Organisations attended the online fair: 48.
- Student registration for the event: 572.
- Overall satisfaction: Student, 71% satisfied to extremely satisfied. Employers, 83% satisfied to extremely satisfied.

Career development appointments

During 2020, the Career Development Practitioners conducted over 1,230 appointments with more than 1,030 current students and USQ graduates from a wide range of disciplines. Common themes included career decision-making, program selection, job search strategies and improving employability. More than 230 appointments were also held with over 220 prospective students to discuss career aspirations, how to navigate the higher education application process, and understanding post-study options.

Career Skills Advantage

In 2020, USQ offered an international taster course, Career Skills Advantage, designed for people who are considering USQ as university of choice. Through the course, students experience USQ's engaging student-friendly approach to learning and graduate career success, and the opportunity to learn the skills and strategies needed for success in their career journey. Upon completion of the activities, students earn a USQ Certificate of Achievement with a digital badge of completion.

Alumni community

USQ actively seeks to keep alumni informed so they remain engaged and knowledgeable of the University's development and achievements. Strong alumni relationships bring many benefits to both USQ and alumni. In particular, alumni can serve as effective role models to prospective and current USQ students, as they reflect positively on the benefits of successful study and the range of career avenues possible. Alumni who are engaged with the University also help to improve our brand locally, nationally and internationally. USQ currently has more than 106 000 alumni in more than 120 countries, with 10 active alumni chapters.

In February, the Alumni team held the improved Alumnus of the Year Awards. This keystone event honoured six outstanding alumni, including Alumnus of the Year, Eve Fraser, and Young Alumnus of the Year, Yee Kuan 'Marc' Chua. All of these winners are proving to be strong brand ambassadors for USQ. COVID-19 provided the Alumni team with an opportunity to identify more than 800 alumni leaders who can be targeted for future engagement activities. This led to more alumni than ever participating in the Virtual Open Day, providing alumni testimonials and participating in virtual panels. In addition, the Alumni team partnered with the Marketing team by having four alumni from around the globe participate in a recruitment webinar for prospective students in June. In July, the Alumni team partnered with the Careers and Employability team to launch the 2020 Ignition Alumni Entrepreneurship Webinar Series. This fortnightly series showcased 10 USQ alumni who are entrepreneurs, who shared their stories with fellow alumni and current USQ students.

2020 also saw the team increase our partnership with the School of Law. We assisted them in sourcing alumni for their virtual 'Things I'd Love to Share with Law Students' series. We also began working closely with the USQ Law Society, as they created a new position, Alumni Liaison Officer, whose role is to increase the involvement of USQ Law alumni in their organisation. This partnership has been proving very productive and we look for it to continue to grow in 2021 and beyond.

As the Alumni team continues to evaluate every aspect of its alumni program, we look to roll out further changes and improvements throughout 2021 and beyond.

RESEARCH

USQ is internationally recognised for high-impact research in our areas of research focus.

In March 2020, the Research and Innovation Division responded swiftly to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on research operations. The Research Leadership team convened weekly to implement contingency plans to enable the continuity of research and project work. A travel protocol was developed to provide guidelines for staff who need to complete off-campus field work associated with research project milestones. Working from home arrangements were established for the workforce from March through to August. To enable the continuation of essential research activities, management of laboratory facilities within the Division began taking place in line with Government requirements. To enable compliance with social distancing guidelines, roster systems and approval processes were implemented to provide oversight of access for all staff and HDR students to ensure that activities were prioritised. In addition to this, personal hygiene requirements and increased cleaning and sanitation of common work areas commenced in accordance with the introduction of the University's *COVIDSafe Plan*. As a result of these efforts, the Division has experienced minimal disruption to the progress of funded research activities, and has experienced growth and continued success despite the inherent challenges faced in 2020.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students and undergraduate (Honours) research students have been more significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing significant hardship brought about by loss of employment and other issues, and many have been supported through the University's COVID-19 Financial Assistance Scheme. While the University supported HDR students to work from home, this has been more difficult for many students in shared housing. Additionally, while laboratory access was able to continue, access was reduced, and in the case of clinically-based research, this ceased for several months. Owing to these issues, there was a significant increase in requests for extensions to thesis submission timelines and scholarships. Despite these delays, a strong cohort of HDR students is expected to graduate.

USQ's overarching goal for Research, as stated in the *USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020*, is that 'USQ is internationally recognised for high-impact research in our areas of research focus'. The University's Vision is to employ world-leading research to help create outcomes that change the world for the better.

Integral to USQ's focused research programs is the offering of HDR awards. Postgraduate research students at USQ have access to a wide range of facilities, and are mentored by our researchers and partners to create a dynamic and rewarding environment that fosters innovation and the nurturing of future entrepreneurs. The overarching Research goal is to be achieved through the following key objectives.

Objective 1: high-quality research that makes a difference to communities

USQ continues to strive to enhance our national and international standing for high-quality, focused and engaged research that makes a difference to communities.

Priorities for 2020 included: improving research culture and engagement across the University, enhancing research reputation and impact, and building research capability; and enhancing industry engagement.

Distinct research focus

Research is fundamental to a university and is integral to its role within the community, and this is particularly true for regional universities. In 2020, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, USQ's research performance has significantly strengthened through increases in both research income and quality of publications. As a result, the University's research profile has seen substantial improvement.

These achievements are the result of strong leadership, a commitment to research excellence, the embedding of our new research structures, continuous improvement and targeted investments in capacity building. The University has continued to build focused and distinct programs in fundamental and applied research that draw on expertise across disciplines, attract world-class researchers and demonstrably deliver impact.

The University's areas of research focus include:

- Agriculture and Agribusiness
- Astrophysics
- Cultural Heritage and Archaeology
- Environmental Sciences
- Health and Behavioural Sciences
- Space and Defence Technologies, with a particular strength in Hypersonics
- Materials Engineering and Engineering Technology
- Regional Community and Economic Development.

USQ has an emerging strength in Artificial Intelligence.

Continued investment in research

The Mount Kent Observatory MINERVA-Australis facility continues to grow, with investment in two new facilities at the site. The first includes the installation of a high-resolution spectrograph fed by two 0.7-metre telescopes which enable continuous investigations of stellar objects over long periods for the Stellar Observations Network Group (SONG). Mount Kent is also now home to a SMARTnet geostationary space debris monitoring telescope which is operated by the German Aerospace Centre (DLR). Mount Kent's remote-access robotic exoplanet observing capability meant that it was the only observatory in Australia and the Southern Hemisphere to operate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

USQ's hypersonic wind tunnel facility was developed in-house and has been operating effectively for more than a decade. It delivers hypersonic flows at up to Mach 7 for hypersonic aerodynamics, free-flight, proximal body separation, heat transfer, control, scramjet engine inlet starting experiments, and fluid-structure interaction experiments that cannot be performed anywhere else in the world. In 2020, USQ signed a collaborative research agreement with the Commonwealth Government's Defence Science and Technology Group (DST). The agreement recognises USQ as having developed unique capabilities in long duration hypersonic ground testing, rocketry and optical diagnostics, all of which are crucial to supporting DST's Science and Technology program. As part of the agreement, USQ has been contracted to scope-out upgrades to its existing hypersonic wind tunnel facility, with initial discussions with DST indicating an interest in a significantly enhanced capability.

A multi-million-dollar expansion of engineering and research facilities at USQ Springfield commenced in August 2020 and will provide four times more space for teaching, learning and research in time for the start of Semester 1, 2021. The expansion is a significant investment for the future and will enable USQ to expand our capacity to conduct research and work with industry to contribute to the development of new knowledge and solutions that address real-world problems. Once completed, the expanded building will feature multiple teaching and research laboratories, including a robotics and automation room, lab spaces for future materials development, power and energy testing, and civil and structural engineering testing systems, technician offices, workshops, a student collaboration space and seminar room.

Continued investment in USQ's polymer composite facilities has been made in conjunction with the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centre Projects (CRC-P) program and a partnership with Wagners Composite Fibre Technologies (CFT), with the purchase of a composite braider facility. Due to delays brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, this facility will not be fully installed in 2020, but will form an integral part of our future capability.

The Research and Innovation Division launched the USQ Capacity Building Grants in April; a new internal funding program which aims to build the capability of early and mid-career researchers to apply for external funding. Seeding grants of up to $15 000 are provided to successful applicants to help them develop their research project concepts. The scheme specifically helps applicants to develop skills in building research project teams and writing grant proposals, and is open to all USQ academic staff. A total of 63 applications were received for the inaugural round of the Capacity Building Grants, with 18 successful applications receiving a total of $240 529 in funding.

Expanding industry engagement

USQ and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF) have finalised an agreement to deliver the Broad-acre Grains Initiative 2.0 (BACI 2.0). BACI 2.0 will deliver more than $5 million dollars in funding to USQ over a five-year period, and is the continuation of a long-standing partnership between USQ and QDAF which began in 2014 and has made significant progress in enabling USQ researchers to enhance grower knowledge of disease management processes in farming systems.

USQ's Institute for Life Sciences and the Environment is co-leading the ONE Basin Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) bid; a proposed industry-led R&D collaboration of research, industry, business and government partners focused on creating a more productive and resilient Murray Darling Basin and for its communities. The ONE Basin CRC is a collaborative effort focused on developing policy, technical and financial solutions to support and reduce exposure to climate, water and environmental threats in the Murray-Darling Basin. This is a significant CRC bid, which will include regional hubs with USQ leading the Northern Hub.

USQ has submitted a bid to the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund to lead the development of a Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub. The Hub will be established at USQ and will support networks of researchers, primary producers and community groups to enhance drought resilience practice, tools and technologies, and facilitate innovative practices on the ground.

USQ's Institute for Advanced Engineering and Space Sciences are working with Defence Science and Technology on a proposal to develop a three-year Taipan rocket manufacturing project. The primary objective of the project is to develop a two-stage rocket motor which will be able to replicate the flow conditions currently achieved at USQ's controlled hypersonic wind tunnel facility, TUSQ. If the proposal is successful, USQ will be the only university in Australia to manufacture its own rocket test beds which could ground and flight test hypersonic experiments. The successful conclusion of this project will position USQ as the prime aerospace university in Australia, while also enabling significant collaborative activity with research and industry primes.

USQ is one of seven of Queensland's eight universities to join the Queensland Defence Science Alliance to support connections and collaborations between member universities, other Australian universities, defence industry and government to grow and integrate Queensland's capacity and capabilities to deliver against Australian defence objectives and strategy.

The National Environment Science Program 2 (NESP 2) is the continuation of a long-term commitment by the Australian Government, with funds granted to address emerging priorities in environment and climate research. The program consists of multi-disciplinary research hubs or consortia hosted by Australian research institutions with national capability to be delivered, where appropriate, through regional nodes. The Resilient Landscapes Hub is one of four new research hubs to be formed through the NESP 2, and is worth $47 million dollars over seven years. USQ, through its Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Systems, will lead research activities into threatened and invasive species on farm for the Hub. The Centre for Applied Climate Sciences will also support the new Climate Systems Hub, hosted by the CSIRO, through the provision of access to critical climate science-focused software engineering, as well as access to its ecological research infrastructure and farming systems research and development expertise.

Recognition of research excellence

Following on from the excellent outcomes achieved in the 2018 Excellence for Research in Australia, USQ has also improved in several significant international rankings in 2020. The key achievements include an improvement in our position in the Times Higher Education Young Universities ranking for 2020, where USQ is now ranked in the 101–150 band (increasing from the 151–200 band in 2019). In the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021 (released in September 2020), USQ has increased its ranking to the 501–600 band, up from the 601–800 band.

Both of these outcomes have been driven by strong performance in citations of research publications, where our ranking for citation impact has improved from 760 (in the world rankings 2019) to 505 (in 2021, released September 2020), and is supported by an improvement in our performance in research income, doctoral completions, research publications and our international outlook.

In 2020, USQ researchers have published five articles in the most prestigious journal publications in scientific fields – Nature and Science. Professors Brad Carter and Robert Wittenmyer from the Centre for Astrophysics co-authored an article in Science titled, *'A multiplanet system of super-Earths orbiting the brightest red dwarf star GJ 887'*, with Adjunct Professor Michael Berg co-authoring the article *'Global threat of arsenic in groundwater'*.

Dr Tim Cowan from the Centre for Applied Climate Sciences was the lead author for one of two articles published in Nature Communications titled *'Ocean and land forcing of the record-breaking Dust Bowl heatwaves across the central United States'*. USQ PhD student Yangli Pan explored the conversion of CO2 into chemicals to create a cost-effective and efficient source of fuel, as first author of the article titled *'Direct evidence of boosted oxygen evolution over perovskite by enhanced lattice oxygen participation'*.

Professors David Ciardi, Jonathon Horner and Robert Wittenmyer, Dr Duncan Wright and Jake Clark also co-authored a paper in 'Nature' detailing observations of a planet co-existing around the AU Microscopii star.

Other recognition

Professor Sonja March was presented with the Research Leader Science Award at the 23rd annual Women in Technology. The Awards are organised and hosted by Women in Technology, one of Queensland's most respected technology industry associations, supporting and promoting the achievements of women in science and technology industries.

An article co-authored by Dr Geoffrey Woolcock from the Rural Economies Centre of Excellence was selected to be part of *The Conversation's* "2020 Yearbook – 2020: The Year that Changed Us", released in November. The article, written in collaboration with Deakin University, Griffith University and the Telethon Kids Institute, discussed how to assist young people to navigate a changed world post-pandemic, and was one of only 50 from 4000 articles chosen to be included in the yearbook.

Dr Jason Bennie from the Centre for Health Research co-authored an article with Dr Katrien de Cocker and USQ PhD Candidate Jane Shakespear-Druey which was published in The Conversation on 27 August. The article *'Strength training is as important as cardio – and you can do it from home during COVID-19'* builds on more than 30 years of clinical research which has highlighted the far-reaching health benefits associated with lifting weights and resistance training, and received extensive media coverage.

Researchers from the Centre for Astrophysics led a global team in the discovery of a new exoplanet orbiting a distant star. It was the first exoplanet confirmation led by the team using the MINERVA-Australis telescope array at USQ's Mount Kent Observatory. The planet, TOI-257b, is about 250 light years away and is likely a gaseous world, given its low density. In addition, Professors Brad Carter and Robert Wittenmyer were part of an international team of researchers who identified multiple planet systems orbiting red dwarf star Gliese 887.

USQ researchers were awarded two new Australian Research Council (ARC) Industrial Transformation Research Hubs. Each granted $5 million Federal Government funding, the hubs will engage Australia's best researchers to develop collaborative solutions to issues facing industrial economies and training the future workforce. Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) Professor John Bell and Professor Zhi-Gang Chen (Centre for Future Materials) will work on improving the safety and reliability of energy storage technologies as part of the research hub, led by Deakin University. Professor Hao Wang (School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering) and Dr Weena Lokuge (School of Civil Engineering and Surveying) will collaborate on a RMIT-led research hub that will focus on reducing landfill waste and transforming reclaimed waste into new materials for use in construction and other manufacturing sectors.

Associate Professor Eliza Whiteside and her team Associate Professors Jackie Lea and Kate Kauter, Madeleine Muir, Dr Raelene Ward, Vicki Horner and Hellen Nutter received an Indigenous Australians Health Program grant to deliver the project titled, 'Improving wound care in regional and remote Aboriginal communities'. The project is a collaboration between Community, Aboriginal Medical Services and USQ nurses and biomedical scientists and aims to develop more personalised wound treatments that can be delivered by Indigenous health workers in regional and remote Indigenous medical services to improve health outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

USQ's Australian Collaboratory for Career Employability & Learning for Living (ACCELL) Research team will host Fulbright Scholar, Associate Professor Levon Esters, from Purdue University, under the provisions of the new Fulbright scheme awarded in 2020, in partnership with the Regional Universities Network (RUN). Dr Esters will undertake the project 'A USA-Australia Nexus Approach to Expanding Access to Tertiary and Career Education: a Vocational Psychology of Agricultural Perspective' and will be based at USQ Toowoomba throughout 2021. The project will examine agricultural career education as a strategy to enhance the tertiary and career prospects of youth and adults in regional, rural and remote areas.

Through funding received from NASA, the California Institute of Technology's Jet Propulsion Lab sub-contracted USQ to provide 300 telescope-hours of observing time for US observers on the MINERVA-Australis telescope, located at the Mount Kent Observatory. USQ will receive USD$180 000 per annum for a period of three years and will be involved in assisting NASA to improve US community access to observations in the Southern Hemisphere, primarily focusing on confirming the planetary nature of transiting exoplanet candidates from NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) and other surveys, and measuring their masses.

Researchers from the Centre for Future Materials were successful in receiving two Advanced Queensland Industry Research Fellowships, including $300 000 for civil engineering research led by Professor Allan Manalo, and $180 000 for nanotechnology research led by Dr Leila Javazmi. Professor Manalo has partnered with the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, Inconmat Australia, and SkillCentred Queensland to develop a non-corrosive alternative to extend the life of marine infrastructure. In collaboration with Wagners CFT and Graphene Manufacture Group, Dr Javazmi's project is using graphene nanofibers to create low-cost and high-efficient sensors for the multi-billion-dollar composites manufacturing industry.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Queensland Government re-purposed the focus of their fellowships to support COVID-19 research, including the social, economic and health impacts, and preparedness research for possible future pandemic or similar scale events. Dr Rajib Rana from the Centre for Health Research received an Advance Queensland COVID-19 Industry Research Fellowship to develop a distress inference system, in partnership with Metro North Mental Health Service. Receiving $300 000 in funding, the project uses artificial intelligence to assist emergency call operators to prioritise and screen calls for signs of distress.

USQ's Centre for Future Materials was awarded $416,000 through the Australian Research Council's (ARC) Discovery Projects scheme for the project 'Cost-effective metal selenide materials for solid-state devices'. The project will be led by Professor Zhi-Gang Chen and will develop an innovative technology for harvesting electricity from waste heat or sunlight and place Australia at the forefront of energy and manufacturing technologies. Professor Levente Kiss, Director (Centre for Crop Health) will also lead a $525,000 ARC DP project in collaboration with the University of Zurich, Switzerland, focused on new solutions to control major plant pathogens that strike Australian crops.

Two USQ research projects were awarded a share in almost $1 million in funding through the Australian Research Council's (ARC) Discovery Early Career Researcher Award scheme. Dr George Zhou's project will receive $425,489 to survey the originals and evolution of the most abundant planets in the galaxy. USQ will also receive $440,675 for a project led by Dr Toan Dinh that will develop new super sensors that are a thousand times more efficient than current technology.

Dr Barbara Ryan from the School of Humanities and Communication was named as one of the recipients of the Harry C. Bigglestone Award by the American National Fire Protection Association. The Award is made annually, for a research paper which best represents excellence in communication of fire protection concepts, which Barbara and her colleagues from La Trobe, Central Queensland University and RMIT received for their paper 'Should We Leave Now? Behavioural Factors in Evacuation Under Wildfire Threat'.

Associate Professor Caroline Hart (lead researcher) and Dr Aaron Timoshanko from the School of Law and Justice, and USQ alumnus Angus Murray received a Queensland Law Society grant ($65 000) to undertake research on the capability of law firms to meet digital disruption. This is important and timely research for the Queensland profession as the legal sector continues to look for practical solutions to overcome the challenges posed by digital disruption through ethical, sustained and profitable legal practice.

Dr Michael Scobie from the Centre for Agricultural Engineering was one of two Australians to be awarded the John Dillon Fellowship with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). Established in 2002 the fellowship supports the professional development of outstanding agricultural scientists or economists from our partner countries and Australia. Fellows from ACIAR partner countries, and two from Australia, who are currently taking part in or have recently completed an ACIAR research project, participate in a blended learning experience of industry networking, visits to relevant Australian institutions, and intensive professional training courses.

Professor Bernadette McCabe and Professor Brad Carter were appointed to the Australian Research Council College of Experts. The College of Experts plays a key role in identifying research excellence and members are experts of international standing drawn from the Australian research community: from higher education, industry and public sector research organisations. They support the advancement of knowledge and contribute to national innovation. Through providing recommendations for fundable ARC applications, providing advice for peer review reforms and providing strategic advice to the ARC on emerging disciplines and cross -disciplinary developments.

Professor Odette Best was awarded an Australian Research Council Special Research Initiative for Australian Society, History and Culture, totalling $116,265 in funding to the University. Professor Best and Professor Bunda will co-lead the project titled, 'Historiography of Aboriginal Queensland Nurses and Midwives 1890s-1950s', to investigate the histories of Aboriginal Queensland women who trained as nurses or midwives from the 1890s - 1950s, countering existing assumptions that First Nations women could not access education and employment. For Aboriginal communities and the nation, a significant benefit expected from the project is a new understanding of Aboriginal women's participation in the educated, paid workforce.

Professor Stuart Biddle, Director (Centre for Health Research) and Professor Zhi-Gang Chen, from the Centre for Future Materials featured on the Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers List for 2020. The list recognises leading researchers as demonstrated by the production of multiple highly-cited papers that rank in the top 1% by citations for field and year in the Web of Science™.

Contribution to global research communities

Director of the Centre for Applied Climate Sciences, Professor Roger Stone was elected as Chair of the United Nations (UN) World Meteorological Organisation's Standing Committee for Agriculture and spearheads global programs on drought preparedness and disaster risk reduction. Professor Stone was also elected by all member nations of the UN to the position of Vice President of the Commission for Weather, Climate, Water, and Related Environmental Services and Applications in Geneva. Professor Stone is now also part of the UN Disaster Risk Reduction program regarding the Global Assessment Report on Drought.

Professor Jonti Horner from the USQ Centre for Astrophysics was made a member of the Astrobiology Society of Britain (ABS). The ABS is a society which explores the relationship between life and its cosmic environment.

Professor Jeff Dunn AO was voted President-Elect of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), and will assume the role for the period 2022-2024. With 1188 organisation members across 172 countries, UICC is a network of research institutes, healthcare agencies, ministries of health and other partners committed to shaping cancer control on a global scale. Professor Dunn is Chair and Research Program Director of USQ's Centre for Health Research's Social and Behavioural Sciences team. The election to this key international role recognises Professor Dunn's 30-year track record of dedicated to cancer control both in Australia and internationally.

Professor Tek Maraseni, an expert in forestry and sustainable resource management from USQ's Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Systems, was part of a global effort to improve the way humans interact with the environment. Professor Maraseni has been conducting red panda conservation research in Nepal and teak value chain analysis research in Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand. He delivered a keynote speech during the regional conference on "Sustainable Teak Value chains for Sustainable Local Development" held on 19-20 February 2020, Vientiane, Lao PDR.

Senior Research Fellow (Wildlife Research) Dr Benjamin Allen was accepted into the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Canid Specialist Group, and appointed the inaugural co-chair of the Dingo Working Group. This multidisciplinary group is comprised of dingo experts from Australia, Papua New Guinea and the USA. This appointment to the world's foremost nature conservation organisation is in recognition of Dr Allen's international expertise in canid conservation and management.

In 2020, the Centre for Agricultural Engineering finalised several research projects which are funded by ACIAR. Dr Alice Melland, Dr Jochen Eberhard and Dr Ann Starasts completed a five-year project investigating the integration of soil and water management in vegetable production in Laos and Cambodia. This project delivered significant enhancements to sustainable increases in vegetable yields, productivity and household economies. The research was conducted in Vientiane Capital and Champasak provinces in Lao PDR, and in Siem Reap and Kampot provinces in Cambodia.

Community Engagement

Associate Professor Ben Lyons, Director of the Rural Economies Centre of Excellence, moderated the Regional Economies Resilience Forum, facilitated by the Committee for Economic Development Australia. The interactive livestream involved more than 600 participants, which focused on the immediate and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on regional economies.

The Rural Economies Centre of Excellence had engagements with over 50 regional and local government organisations throughout 2020 and in the midst of COVID-19 presented a series of 12 online workshops with over 500 participants from all parts of regional, rural and remote Queensland. The workshops provided rural and regional leaders and economic development practitioners with an opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge. These workshops provided insights into leadership for economic recovery, crises management in regions, regional tourism, water security, digital connectivity, natural capital valuation, and economic analysis for production and supply chains.

Researchers from the USQ Centre for Astrophysics have worked with national astronomy organisation Astronomy Australia Limited to establish a 'space research' community that shares the vision for Australian astronomy to be 'world leading and publicly valued'.

Researchers from the Centre for Applied Climate Sciences have continued to engage with major grains industry consultants, regional shire mayors, the Remote Area Planning and Development Board (Longreach) and many rural organisations throughout Queensland on seasonal climate preparedness. Examples include:

- The Forewarned is Forearmed project, which works closely with reference group members of the northern red meat and sugar industry to deliver direct value to farmers through improving the forecasts of extreme climate and weather events, and equipping farmers with the information and risk management tools to be forewarned and proactively prepared.
- The Climate Mates Program which forms part of the Northern Australia Climate Program. Climate Mates are individuals selected for their knowledge of the industry and their capacity to network and communicate with producers in key red meat regions of Northern Australia. They aim to improve the use of weather and climate forecasts through training and engaging with graziers, advisors and supporting the broader extension team across northern Australia.

In 2020, the overarching Drought and Climate Adaptation Program, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Department of Environment and Science, Bureau of Meteorology and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) received a Highly Commended Award at the National Resilience Australia Awards.

Objective 2: research training that produces innovators and entrepreneurs

USQ continues to build a reputation for research training that produces innovators and entrepreneurs for the jobs of the future.

Priorities for 2020 included: focusing on timely completion of HDR students.

Graduate Research School

The second full year of operation of USQ's Graduate Research School was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected our ability to recruit students from overseas. As a result of COVID-19, the Graduate Research School provided a significant amount of support to HDR students who were required to transition to off-campus arrangements in March, and also supported many students through other associated impacts and interruptions to their research, particularly for those students undertaking laboratory-based work.

In total, the Graduate Research School approved 268 requests to work from home and 80 requests to borrow USQ computer equipment. Over a five-month period, from March to July 2020, a total of 37 HDR students in receipt of stipend scholarships were awarded extensions, due to COVID-19 impacts on their progress. The cost of these extensions was estimated at $194 231. Non-scholarship HDR students whose progress was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, were provided with options for leave of absence or extensions of submission date. Additional supports were offered to HDR students impacted by COVID-19, including offerings of twice-daily Zoom Drop-In Sessions during the physical office closure, and full accessibility during business hours via telephone and email; provision of a referral service for HDR students experiencing financial hardship to access the USQ COVID-19 Financial Assistance Scheme, and welfare and wellness support services; promotion of opportunities to participate in remote internships offered by the APR Intern program; employment opportunities throughout the Research and Innovation Division; and the establishment of a fund to support on-campus international students experiencing demonstrable acute financial hardship, distributed in the form of equity bursaries up to the value of $1 000.

The Graduate Research School collaborated with the USQ Careers & Employability team to host a webinar on resume writing for HDR students, and facilitated a webinar titled *'Facing Uncertainty – Reflecting on HDR Experiences During COVID-19'*. Resources were also shared with the HDR student cohort via social media and the HDR Facebook Group, providing advice about studying in unprecedented times.

A review of the Graduate Research School was undertaken in late-2020, in line with the implementation plan for its establishment in 2018.

Research training and development

USQ has continued to build a research culture of excellence, embedding commitment and accountability for high-quality performance outcomes. USQ's Researcher Development and Training Program, ReDTrain, is a comprehensive, all-of-University program that provides resources, enrichment and rewards across the spectrum of USQ researchers. In 2020, the Program continued to play a major role in driving the University's research performance through its suite of coordinated initiatives, and in strengthening a vibrant research culture to help researchers and research students grow their capacity and skills. The Research Giants program and Eminent Visiting Scholars Scheme (EViSS) were unable to be completed as planned, due to interruptions to travel and our inability to hold larger face-to-face meetings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, the ReDTrain program continued to be delivered online, offering and/or promoting over 200 events in 2020.

A number of research seminars were offered throughout the year, including a series of presentations by research giant, Professor Christopher Folland, an internationally recognised expert in seasonal forecasting and climate variability, and advisor at the United Kingdom's Met Office Hadley Centre. More than 20 other research seminars were held throughout the year promoting research activities from varying disciplines across the University, highlighting capacity and internal collaborative opportunities for both academic staff and HDR students.

In 2020, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) launched a series of professional development workshops designed to support researchers in developing grant applications. The series focused on fundamental principles for developing grant applications, including building a track record, preparing your project description and developing your budget. Sessions were also provided focusing on more specific topics of relevance to researchers applying for ARC and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funding.

ENTERPRISE

USQ is a socially responsible and well-managed enterprise with a work culture that promotes high performance and is reflective of our values.

Objective 1: Employer of Choice

USQ aspires to be an employer of choice with a high-performance, values-based culture that enables achievement of its education and research goals.

Priorities for 2020 included: Continuing to uplift capability and performance; building a collaborative, responsive and inclusive culture; and empowering staff to innovate and work in different ways.

Strategic workforce planning and performance

The people and culture initiatives undertaken during 2020 were guided by the key talent strategies outlined in the *USQ Workforce and Talent Management Plan 2016–2020*, which is in its final year. The Plan outlines the critical people strategies needed to develop the University's future workforce to align with and achieve its long-term strategic priorities and objectives. It helps to focus and reshape how we think about work, what constitutes work, and the capabilities needed to be productive contributors to work in the future. A brief commentary on these initiatives and actions, including key highlights, is contained below, along with the rapid pivot in workforce design, flexibility and operations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Workforce and leadership capability

TALENT STRATEGY AND ATTRACTION

USQ maintained its focus on building brand awareness and raising its profile as an employer of choice in the higher education sector. This has been achieved through the ongoing use of USQ's LinkedIn channel, with the total number of followers growing to approximately 73 000, total visitors per month averaging between 3 000 and 3 500, and an average engagement rate of between 2.5% and 3.3%. Through the support of Corporate Communications, USQ has also focused on the use of other social channels (such as Twitter) to increase its level of engagement and visibility to further strengthen its reputation as an employer of choice.

To progress goals within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy and promote the University as an employer of choice to attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent, the University engaged the services of Employer Branding Australia to capture the stories of current Indigenous academic employees. The stories were promoted via several channels, including the University Careers website, social media and via a live *USQ Salon* discussion.

Employer Branding Australia also worked with the University to develop other multimedia content in support of promoting USQ's employer brand, focusing on USQ core values, and highlighting key academic and research talent. The videos have been used for both internal and external engagement purposes to attract and engage critical talent aligned to University strategies and priorities. In addition, the University invested in a People Stories Campaign to identify and engage a number of employees across a range of professions and diversity groups, inviting them to tell their individual stories and bring to life the University's employee value proposition.

The University continued to focus strategically on how it attracts and recruits talent, developing several targeted recruitment campaigns for niche roles. A review is underway on the University's recruitment processes and practices to deliver a more contemporary model aligned to the strategic needs of the organisation.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The leadership development portfolio in 2020 focused on providing leaders with practical supports and learning opportunities to build digital-era leadership capability. Learning opportunities included cohort-based programs, personalised executive coaching, podcasts, learning snippets and professional development grants. A total of 112 employees participated in leadership development activities in 2020, with a strategic focus on leading a digital workforce.

A new offering in 2020, in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic, was the Leading a Digital Workforce Program. Designed specifically for the Senior Leadership Group, the program consisted of weekly learning topics focused on a range of digitally relevant topics, a weekly facilitated community of practice wherein leaders were able to share leadership insights, and an online space with curated wellbeing content.

In addition, emerging leaders across the organisation were supported to build their leadership capability through the Leading Self program. In 2020, the Leading Self program was delivered using a blended model of online and in-person learning, and focused on leading in an online world and maintaining employee health and wellbeing. A range of individual leadership supports were also delivered to employees in the form of executive coaching (internal and external coaches) and diagnostic tools (for example, multi-rate feedback).

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

Closely connected with the work completed in the leadership development portfolio, was the targeted development of management capability through the USQ Management Essentials Program. Management Essentials is an online competency-based management training program designed specifically to uplift manager capability at USQ. It comprises nine competencies, and a range of assessment tasks, to validate learning and employee competency in management functions.

The target cohort during 2020 was the newly created positions of Academic Team Leaders, with approximately 25 Academic Team Leaders commencing the program to date. It is anticipated that all managers and supervisors at USQ will have completed this program by the end of 2022. Enhancements to this program include a new module on leading and managing a digital workforce.

PEOPLE CAPABILITY

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting rapid shift to working from home, the focus in 2020 shifted to providing virtual learning opportunities for employees in line with the *USQ People Capability Framework*, with a specific focus on building workforce capability in the key areas of levering emerging technology, and continuous improvement and innovation within a business partner context. A total of 72 sessions were delivered to over 525 employees, with approximately 84% being delivered completely online. The self-reported impact of this program was a 16% increase in participant capability.

With the increased focus on e-learning this year, one of the most successful initiatives was the development and delivery of a range of online self-serve resources designed to support employee wellbeing and productivity via the HR Learning Hub. In particular, an online COVID-19 Return to Work module was created to assist employees to transition successfully and safely back onto campus, which was completed by 1,210 employees.

ACADEMIC EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS

The *USQ Academic Employee Expectations Framework*, a foundational element of the Academic Plan, was released in 2020. The Framework was informed by current practice within the Australian higher education sector and developed through multiple rounds of consultation. The Framework provides a practical and flexible guide to improve the clarity of expectations, contributions and achievements of academic employees, and supports the achievement of USQ's strategic goals.

CAREER PROGRESSION – ACADEMIC PROMOTION

Following a major review of academic promotion in 2019, a suite of streamlined processes was implemented in 2020. Key improvements included strengthening the principle of achievement relative to opportunity, trialling a streamlined rating and weighting system, and providing greater clarity to determining equivalent standing.

The number of applications received for academic promotion in 2020 was lower than previous years, potentially reflecting the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on employees. In recognition of the specific impact COVID-19 has had on female employees and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, the promotion application period was extended to encourage an increase in promotion applications. In total, 52 applications were received for promotion in 2020, which is 44.8% lower than 2019. A sustained multi-year effort to support academic employees applying for promotion continued in 2020 in the form of the Senior Academic Development Program, in which five employees were actively involved. This intensive program, designed specifically for senior female academics nearing their next career progression, provided individualised development opportunities in the form of executive coaching, sponsorship of conference attendance, internal senior mentoring, career development advice, and international scholarship application preparation support.

The overall success rate for academic promotion applications in 2020 was 73.1%, which was 15.5% higher than the 2019 success rate.

CAREER PROGRESSION – STUDY ASSISTANCE

The study assistance program continues to reflect the changing requirements of employees' study and career progression, with reduced applications for undergraduate programs, and a slight increase in postgraduate (including doctoral) programs. Program enrolments tended towards developing capability in leadership, coaching and innovation in a tertiary education environment.

Workforce engagement and culture

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The University conducted its sixth employee engagement survey in March 2020 and achieved a strong participation rate of 76%. Overall, the results showed that employee engagement remained high at 74%. The results show that employees share a strong belief in the purpose and values of USQ and highly value their relationships with co-workers. High levels of satisfaction from employees were found in regard to USQ's flexibility, safety, and diversity and inclusion.

The results also highlighted some continuing themes that the University must give focus to over the coming years as it continues to strive towards improved impact from its educational and research activities, including building a shared understanding of the future direction and strategy for the University through improved communication, streamlining change management, and improving work processes. A working group of USQ employees was responsible for actively assisting the University to gain a greater understanding of these issues and in identifying solutions that address the needs of all employees.

ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

USQ's values continue to drive University culture and are supported through the USQ Service Excellence Program. At USQ, we believe that all employees have a role to play in bringing our values to life through their strong commitment to *Respect, Integrity and Excellence*. This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, with employees demonstrating a strong commitment to relationships, community, inclusion, integrity, collaboration and creativity. The results from the 2020 employee engagement survey show that employees' awareness and belief in USQ values is 89%, which is 7% higher than other benchmarked universities throughout Australia and New Zealand. In recognition of those employees who live these values, USQ's recognition and reward program celebrates their achievements throughout the year via the University's peer recognition system, Values-Champions Awards, and Excellence Awards.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

The corporate Excellence Awards, the pinnacle internal employee awards for the University, have continued to expand to support more areas of excellence throughout the University, with new awards being introduced in the Learning and Teaching category, with further awards in Research and Community Service to be embedded into the program in 2021.

The University's peer recognition program, STARS (Say Thanks and Recognise Success), has continued to flourish. In 2020, over 2,000 STARS have been received by employees, with the top two reasons being 'going above and beyond' and 'providing excellent service'. STARS were received by employees at all campuses and across all five divisions, and of these 46% are unique to the recipient. The program has had a strong impact on the recognition culture at USQ, and has been a valued method of recognising colleagues and supporting social connection whilst staff were working remotely during COVID-19.

USQ has also partnered with UniSuper for a third consecutive year to present USQ's Values Champion Award. This award is bestowed on four deserving employees who continually demonstrate their commitment to the values of the University and bring them to life through their daily interactions, performance and behaviours.

Health, safety and wellbeing

The health, safety and wellbeing of staff has always been paramount. To support the wellbeing of all employees and strengthen wellbeing culture, a revised framework was embedded encompassing four pillars of wellbeing – physical, emotional, social and financial. The framework has enabled the University to offer support to employees in new ways and provide sustainable outcomes for staff and for USQ. This holistic approach enabled USQ to be agile and responsive during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a diverse range of initiatives and programs were able to be embedded into the University's overarching program to support a remote workforce and further strengthen our wellbeing culture.

To monitor the wellbeing of the workforce and understand how the University could continue to provide staff with the necessary supports during the COVID-19 pandemic, a Wellbeing Pulse Survey was conducted in June 2020. The survey, which examined 10 key health and wellbeing metrics, showed positive results in all areas, ranging from 70% up to 94% favourable, with health and safety identified as a key strength. Staff perceptions of how the University and its leadership responds in such times of crisis are highly influential in determining future levels of engagement, productivity and performance, and USQ's positive results indicate it is well positioned to build upon this workforce momentum to meet the challenges and opportunities of the next few years.

The *USQ Safety Strategy 2020–2022* was formally endorsed and launched to the wider USQ safety community. The Strategy's key priorities aim to develop a positive safety culture and actively manage workplace health and safety risk to enable staff and students to work and study safely and productively.

The University has continued to implement a range of improvements to assist in positive safety performance. Strategic initiatives have included a focus on mental health and wellbeing, an audit and improvement plan for biosafety, and a safety culture engagement program. Additionally, training in specific workplace hazards, such as chemical safety, manual handling and risk management, were developed and delivered. These improvement initiatives have been delivered via virtual and interactive training methods and have resulted in increased safety motivation and knowledge. The roll-out of further online safety training modules will continue throughout 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic required many operational changes to ensure the safety of the University's staff, students and visitors. In response to the pandemic, a University *COVIDSafe Plan* was established to define a university-wide approach to managing key risks. The framework included the development of asset-specific guidelines to respond to evolving public health guidelines and university needs. Risk management plans for all organisational units were developed to ensure COVIDSafe guidelines and control measures were established prior to the return to campus by staff and students.

In response to quality assurance audits, the USQ Safety team has initiated a Biosafety Improvement Project to deliver a framework for the management of biosafety risks across the University. The project team will improve biosafety risk mitigation strategies and develop an action plan to improve the residual risks associated with the management of biosafety hazards, and the operation of physical containment spaces.

Workforce structure and flexibility

Workforce design

As part of supporting the rapid pivot of the workforce to a remote working model due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University developed a people toolkit for leaders and managers. This toolkit was designed to assist them in safely moving their people off-campus, and engaging with and supporting those staff whilst working at home. A range of new leave arrangements were implemented, along with a streamlined process for setting-up and approving work-at-home arrangements, and included leave options for employees unable to undertake their regular work priorities from home.

As part of recovery planning and supporting staff to work in a productive and supportive flexible environment, the University undertook a pulse survey of management experiences during the COVID-19 remote work period. The results showed significant support for remote and flexible working, with positive experiences reported around high levels of employee productivity, wellbeing and engagement. The University is taking the learnings from this experience forward into the development and maturation of its flexible work framework and job design.

Industrial frameworks

The *USQ Enterprise Agreement 2018–2021* was effective from 3 April 2019. The parties to the agreement are working to implement its key initiatives to contribute to the provision of a strong industrial foundation for the University's workforce. The Enterprise Agreement review and bargaining preparation has commenced for 2021, with a focus on alignment with USQ strategy and maintaining a flexible, healthy and engaged workforce of the future.

Redundancy/Severance

In the latter part of 2020, the University undertook a voluntary severance program, which provided staff with the opportunity to leave the University. During the whole of 2020, 54 employees received redundancy or severance packages at a cost of $7,571,000.

Organisational review and change

As part of the University's continuing cycle of planning development and business improvement, organisational unit reviews and organisational changes are conducted as and when appropriate. Reviews conducted during 2020 included the following:

OPEN ACCESS COLLEGE (OAC)

As a result of an external review of the Open Access College conducted in 2019, an internal review of the College was commenced in November 2019 to ensure it has a functional organisational structure that will underpin and sustain its ongoing role and responsibilities within USQ. The process involved extensive consultation over a six-month period, with the new structure and renaming of OAC to USQ College, coming into effect from 8 June 2020. The renaming to USQ College reflects the College's future strategic direction, the core of which is the offering of flexible, effective and supportive pathways and learning opportunities for students, regardless of their background or circumstance, to gain entry into USQ and/or to thrive in their field of study. USQ College comprises three functional areas reporting to the Director, including Pathways; English Language; and College Support Services. The Global Learning Program (GLP) transitioned from the College to the International Office, thus continuing to cultivate a coherent strategic approach between the outreach and engagement function of the GLP and the ongoing strategic development of international activities and engagement facilitated by the International Office.

ACADEMIC QUALITY UNIT

Integral to the academic quality framework is the newly established Academic Quality Unit (AQU) which supports a whole-of-institution approach to managing the quality of academic programs and the quality of student learning experiences at the University through the development and implementation of supporting frameworks, systems and processes, and associated evaluation and reporting. The Director of the AQU has overall responsibility for implementation of the academic quality framework to ensure alignment with the *USQ Strategic Plan* and to meet statutory quality standards.

To ensure that all staff were well informed and had an opportunity to provide input and commentary on the proposed structure and functions of the AQU, a single-phase Structural Realignment Proposal and Consultation Document was released to staff in the Academic Division on 16 July for a two-week consultation period which closed on 30 July. There were 16 written submissions received, with the feedback indicating strong support for the establishment of the AQU, and for its strategic and operational intent. The final implementation plan was released on 19 August, with the new structure coming into effect from 31 August.

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

There is now more than ever an imperative for Business Schools to be innovative, to find new strategic commercial advantages, to develop and grow new markets and to respond to new learners and learning. Underpinned by these goals, an organisational review was undertaken to strategically re-evaluate the school structure, which included the School of Commerce and the School of Management and Enterprise. The review included a proposal to consolidate the Schools as a single functional School unit in the Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts, titled School of Business.

MARKETING, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

As part of structural realignment of Marketing and Student Attraction undertaken between November 2019 and January 2020, the Marketing function (including the Marketing, Web, Program Content, Graphic Design and Market Research teams) was transitioned into the Engagement portfolio. This new structure came into effect from 3 February 2020. In the months since those structural changes, USQ continued to monitor the core business of the new function, to ensure it was meeting its new strategic priorities - including a new emphasis on brand development - in addition to providing creative capacity in-house and agile, modern, responsive, fit-for-purpose campaign marketing.

A realignment proposal was released in October 2020 which recognised the existing strengths and skills within the relatively small team and identified missing capacity. It also recognised the need to boost creative capacity in-house and prioritise activities which deliver benefits for the University's reputation, profile, and recruitment. It acknowledged a changed emphasis in product delivery, in particular a new emphasis on brand development (as opposed to simply brand compliance) and the need for efficient work practices. The proposed new structure builds on the increased strategic impact achieved by an integrated approach to engagement, marketing, media and communications. A consultation round was undertaken with impacted staff, with the new structure taking effect from November 2020.

OFFICE OF RESEARCH

On 15 January 2020, a Proposal and Consultation Document was released to staff in the Office of Research Development and Office of Research for consultation and feedback on the proposed future structure of these areas. An internal overview of the functions of the two Offices highlighted that an alignment of similar functions would potentially create greater efficiencies and a streamlining of work-flow processes. The new structure establishes a 'one-stop-shop' for research service delivery and compliance functions, meaning disestablishment of the Office of Research Development and a transitioning of the current positions and functions currently within that Office into the Office of the DVC (Research and Innovation) or the Office of Research. Feedback was sought from impacted staff with the general view that the realignment was positive and supported by staff, and the new structure came into effect on 17 February 2020.

TRAVEL

In late 2019, USQ completed the Corporate Travel Office review with approval given to the USQ Corporate Travel Office Review – Final Implementation Plan. That plan noted that the final structure of the travel team would be considered post implementation of any revised policy, procedure and process. The travel team was consulted and engaged fully in the formal change process in 2019, and aware that at completion of the travel project, the final resourcing requirements and staff structure would be reviewed as part of the approval final implementation plan. In moving towards the implementation of a travel structure and function aligned with the needs of the business, a consultation process commenced with a change proposal released to staff on 8 October 2020 with a closing date for feedback of 19 October 2020. As a result, the structure and size of the travel team changed from 5 to 2 staff, and the new organisational structure came into effect from 23 November 2020. Impacted staff were offered the opportunity to participate in processes to transition to the new team, or to elect redundancy or redeployment at the University.

HUMAN RESOURCES

In order to position the human resources function to support the delivery of the USQ Strategic Plan, an initial Proposal and Consultation Document released for feedback and consultation on 8 October 2020; followed by a revised proposal on 28 October 2020 for a further period of feedback and consultation.

The new structure reflects a true, developed, business partnering model with high calibre professionals leading the relationships with the business to deliver on the change and performance targets of the University. It emphasises the function of people partners with talent acquisition, supported by an effective and efficient people services and systems team, with three specialist centres around workplace relations, people strategy and organisational design and innovation. The change focuses on a partnering and coaching model, with delivery of strategic outcomes embedded into business as usual, underpinned by the philosophy of developing a leader lead model to people management. The restructure saw 5 roles in the existing Human Resources function cease to exist, with a number of roles established in a newly created People Partners & Talent Acquisition team, along with other new roles in workplace relations and policy, and strategic initiatives, in the rebranded People Portfolio from 4 January 2021.

ELLIPSIS MEDIA

In 2018 USQ endorsed a business case and 5-year business plan for USQ's ongoing operation of Ellipsis Media. With an emphasis on maintaining internal service responsiveness for staff and student print, the model offset internal costs with external revenue and a shifting focus to trade print, rather than a direct to customer approach. COVID-19 significantly compromised Ellipsis Media's ability to deliver against its 5-year business plan and introduced a number of unforeseen challenges predicted to have ongoing impact to the viability and sustainability of Ellipsis Media. As a result the University explored and considered a range of options in relation to the future operations of Ellipsis Media, and made the decision to cease Ellipsis Media operations by 31 March 2021.

In moving towards the implementation of this decision, a Proposal and Consultation Document was released for staff feedback and consultation on 16 October 2020. Following this consultation, a final plan including the internal transfer of certain functions and redeployment of a number of current staff, was put in place to support a phased cessation of activities. Seven (7) current positions will no longer be required and staff advised of options, including redundancy and redeployment.

PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE SUPPORT SERVICES (PPSS)

An appropriately structured planning and performance support function is a key enabler for the University to meet the opportunities and challenges it faces within the higher education sector and deliver on the University's Strategic Plan and vision. Over the course of 2020, the University undertook significant work to address external pressures (COVID-19, shifting higher education landscape and funding models) including development of a new Strategic Plan, progression of the Academic Plan and intensive focus on Load forecasting and review. These processes highlighted existing capability gaps and areas for critical improvement in the Planning Reporting and Analytics function, including the need for more sophisticated means of load modelling that enable dynamic scenario modelling with automatic integration to the finance system, and more sophisticated and automated predictive analytics capability to support strategic decision-making. Progressively, it became evident that with improved understanding and demand for data analysis and insights, a greater technical and data science capability was required.

A Proposal and Consultation Document was released for feedback and consultation on 19 October, which resulted in disestablishment of one position, and the creation of an additional role with increased technical data science and technology knowledge, with the new structure taking effect from 7 December 2020.

Social responsibility and inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2020* is in its final year of implementation. This year has been characterised by a greater focus on building inclusive infrastructure aimed at creating a sustainable impact on an inclusive work and learning environment.

Inclusive infrastructure and environment

The USQ Inclusion Index was created to increase visibility and transparency on inclusive leadership, infrastructure and connectivity. The Inclusion Index was developed utilising engagement survey data, and produced at the divisional, faculty and work area level. The Inclusion Index captures a unique subset of data that provides insights and enables USQ to respond proactively to building inclusive workplaces through recognising and profiling strengths and building on opportunities for development.

In alignment with societal shifts and a considerable focus on sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention, response and support, both at USQ and in the sector, the University responded by advocating and promoting an inclusive learning and working environment through creating a scaffolded approach to building organisational, supervisory and employee capability. The scaffolded approach focused on the development of specialist policy, procedure, inclusion networks and resources, and multi-modal training programs for building awareness, skills and provision of support to employees and bystanders.

As a workplace that seeks to provide people with the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability and be as effective as possible in their role, a new *Workplace Adjustment Procedure* was developed in conjunction with the Australian Network on Disability. This was supported by a centralised fund for workplace adjustments, and training to equip managers and supervisors to provide the most inclusive workplaces for employees.

With learning and awareness as the first step in creating inclusive workplaces, the University has made available a suite of inclusion resources on Core Inclusion, First Nations Australians, People Living with a Disability, LGBITQ+, Cultural Awareness, and Unconscious Bias. These modules seek to ensure that all employees are equipped with the knowledge and skills to continue their learning journey on creating safe and inclusive workplace and learning environments.

Connectivity

USQ has continued key partnerships with the Australian Network on Disability (AND) and the Diversity Council Australia (DCA) to guide best practice, and to ensure that it is continuously improving to remove unintended barriers to employment, and creating an inclusive work environment. This has been realised through a review of recruitment and selection processes, as well as the provision of an Internship program focused on building employment pathways for people living with a disability.

Connection and collaboration are key to achieving an inclusive work environment. These key attributes are enabled by the diverse networks available to USQ employees and students, including the USQ Women's Network, Ally Network, Accessibility Network, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employees Network, and the Multicultural Network.

Diversity and inclusion-related events enable employees an opportunity to celebrate, reflect and connect through a shared and common purpose. They are a powerful visible symbol of the University's support for, and inclusion of, all people. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, events shifted in their method of delivery, with a focus on virtual delivery in 2020, and included events in support of:

- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia Day
- Disability Action Week
- Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month
- Reconciliation Week
- International Women's Day
- Indigenous Literacy Day
- Pride month
- R U OK Day.

Gender equity initiatives

To build on the strengths of gender equity initiatives at USQ, a leadership-initiated review was conducted to undertake a longitudinal study of progress at USQ since 2011 on women's career progression, development, balance and support, and gender equity culture and leadership. This review has provided a number of key recommendations which will continue to propel USQ forward in demonstrating the value placed on gender equity in the workplace. As a complementary activity, USQ achieved Workplace Gender Equality Agency compliance through its mandatory annual reporting. Specific development program initiatives to support the career advancement of women were implemented, including the women's academic development program and promotion support, targeted development grants, and time buy-out for academic women to complete their PhD submission.

SAGE INITIATIVE

USQ has a long-standing commitment to inclusive workplaces that underpins current and future corporate strategies, including *USQ's Strategic Plan 2016–2020* and *Employee Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018–2020*. In October 2017, the University became a member of the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) initiative, a national program launched in 2015 in response to the Australian higher education and research sectors' need for a coordinated, national approach to improving gender equity in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM). USQ is participating in the *Athena SWAN Charter*, an evaluation and accreditation framework from the United Kingdom that works toward enhancing gender equity in STEMM. Participating organisations are required to undertake a self-assessment process and apply for Bronze Award accreditation within two years of becoming members of SAGE.

In July 2019, USQ submitted its application for the Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award and this has been used as the mechanism to consolidate the institution's gender equality initiatives in STEMM. In February 2020 USQ received notification that its application was unsuccessful. Feedback from the SAGE Peer Review Panel indicated that USQ was to be commended for an honest acknowledgement of and reflection on some of the disparities that exist and their underlying causes. However, the panel also identified areas that require further attention, including evidence provided against certain assessment criteria and particularly the details within the four-year Action Plan. Subsequently, the University decided to address the issues raised by the SAGE Peer Review Panel and submitted a revised application on 30 September. The University was advised in late December that it had been awarded the Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples initiatives

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy 2018–2020* has created a platform for sustainable change over the three years of it being in effect. The University has worked towards achieving successful outcomes under the following strategy goals and objectives.

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

In alignment with the requirements of the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy, USQ is working towards having 3% of the workforce who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees. Whilst progress has been positive over the course of the previous two years, various factors, including the impact of COVID-19 restricting the University's ability to engage in its flagship programs for trainees, interns and other pathway to employment initiatives, have seen this percentage decrease to 2.31% in 2020.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Engagement and support has focused on providing and actively promoting opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees to link into networks, health support programs, information and support. This includes the selection of an Employee Assistance Provider that has specific supports and infrastructure for First Nations People, the development of a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander webpage for prospective and current employees, and the continued development of a cultural capability program.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT

Current professional development and career development activities have been enhanced to ensure that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees are recognised and rewarded for their contribution. Four of USQ's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees were profiled through a storytelling experience which provided an in-depth understanding and awareness of their unique and inspiring journeys to becoming proud First Nations role-models and USQ employees.

Professional development grants were also awarded to support the career development and advancement of professional employees, along with time buy-out opportunities for academic employees progressing towards their PhD, and tailored support for academic promotion.

A highlight for 2020 was the development of the framework for the USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Program, developed in partnership with an expert Australian Indigenous agency, to build employee understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

PLANNING AND ALIGNMENT

The redevelopment of the Terms of Reference for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Workforce Strategy Committee has seen an expansion of membership from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and students. This Committee has a redirected reporting responsibility directly to the Vice-Chancellor's Executive, ensuring increased institutional accountability, transparency and commitment. Additionally, all committees established and governed by the Academic Board have one elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee within their membership. This equates to 35% of USQ committees having at least one elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative on Academic Board and University Management Committees across USQ.

Objective 2: partner of choice with business and the community

A responsible corporate citizen

Reducing our carbon footprint

The University's community-centred values drive our active and engaged approach to social and environmental issues. USQ participates fully through its academic and professional contributions to climate change response and sustainability. The University is committed to continuous improvement and minimising the adverse effects of its activities on the environment.

Across 2020, the Sustainability team's priorities focused on continuous improvement and environmental management. A draft Environmental Action Plan was developed to be incorporated into an overarching Sustainability Strategy. The plan targets critical areas, such as resource consumption, reduction and recovery. Key deliverables of the overarching plan will be a series of best-practice principles and practices with respect to energy and emissions, waste, water management, transport, biodiversity and environmental risk management which align to global sustainable development goals.

As a large-scale consumer of energy, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in major operational infrastructure being placed into hibernation for a number of months. Combined with a significant reduction in on-campus activity, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the organisation's energy, waste and water consumption. Whilst the reduction in activity has resulted in a reduction in annual greenhouse gas emissions, it should be considered as abnormal, as this is not a true reduction in emissions intensity.

Implementation of key energy efficiency projects continued across 2020 resulting in significant reductions in energy consumption and maintenance-related costs. Some of these projects include:

- the progressive expansion of the University's solar PV portfolio with the installation of solar at the Mount Kent Observatory and additional rooftop installations at USQ Toowoomba
- additional LED lighting upgrades across the campuses with more of the building portfolio upgraded to energy-efficient lighting solutions.

Environmental Key Performance Indicators – 2020

Carbon Emissions	
Total direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions by weight	Scope 1 (Direct) = 502tCO2-e/year, Scope 2 (Indirect) = 11,757 tCO2-e.
Other relevant indirect greenhouse gas emissions by weight	Scope 3 (Other Indirect) Air Travel = 249tCO2-e, Rental Vehicle Use = 8tCO2-e, Waste to Landfill = 239tCO2-e.
Energy	
Direct energy consumption	Direct Energy Consumption by Source: Natural Gas = 8571 GJ, Fleet Vehicle Use = 3913GJ, Standby Generators = 507GJ, Plant & Equipment Fuel = 230GJ.
Indirect energy consumption	Purchased Electricity Consumption: Toowoomba Campus = 8,492,582kWh, Springfield Campus = 2,633,882kWh, Ipswich Campus = 3,172,053kWh & Queensland College of Wine & Tourism = 215,699kWh.
Renewable Energy	Onsite Solar PV Generation: Toowoomba = 2,516MWh, Springfield = 256MWh, Ipswich = 268MWh.
Waste	
Total weight of waste by type and disposal method	General waste to landfill = 217 tonnes, Resource recovery: Cardboard = 20tonnes, Commingled waste = 19tonnes, Metal = 3tonnes and Ewaste = 1tonne recycled.

Previous major sustainability projects continue to benefit the University's emissions profile, with the 2MW Solar Array contributing 3039.24MW of clean energy and offsetting the University's carbon footprint by 2461.78tCO2-e.

With a continued focus on responsible waste management, the University has strengthened its campus-wide recycling and resource recovery programs. To maximise waste diversion opportunities, the University implemented an onsite organic waste solution at USQ Toowoomba in late-2020, resulting in a reduction in campus waste stream, cost and CO2-e emissions.

As a significant consumer of water, the University is committed to water conservation, harvesting and reuse across all its campuses. To balance growing demand with compliance obligations, the University has commenced work on the development of campus-specific water management plans to drive more efficient use and sustainable management of campus water resources.

Sound business model, service culture and learning culture

During 2020, and necessarily as a result of the COVID-19 impacts on the higher education sector, USQ continued to implement strategies to keep the University on a sound and sustainable business footing, providing a basis for securing 'business partner of choice' status.

Professional development of staff also seeks to position the University for the workplace of the future and to cultivating a strong service culture.

Ensuring informed decision-making: Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence Platform

The modernisation of the Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence Platform continued in 2020. This is guided by the three-year *Business Intelligence (BI) Roadmap* and is driven by the University's business needs, in response to its strategic direction. The implementation of the BI Roadmap aims to establish an agile data platform that supports the University community in undertaking evidence-based decision-making. Operating under the auspices of the Data, Information, Technology, Strategy and Governance Committee (DITSGC), the Data, Analytics and Reporting Board (DARB) provides oversight to the implementation of the BI Roadmap in line with the University's enterprise information management principles.

Service improvement

A Service Improvement team was formed within Planning and Performance Support Services in late-2019. In 2020 the Service Improvement team partnered across the University to build organisational maturity and capability in business process review and service digitisation. The related continuous improvement pipeline forms part of a strategic Integrated Planning Framework. Process change and improvement initiatives align with policy and are delivered through a staged and integrated approach to project delivery.

As part of their work across 2020 the Service Improvement Team has continued to support the implementation of Service Excellence Action Plans within Enterprise Services. The Action Plans vary from area to area, but are broadly aimed at improving customer access points, customer engagement, service standards, capability and processes. The most significant Action Plan progressions in 2020 have included the release of 60 digitised forms, 400 knowledge articles and improvements to associated processes in Financial Services, ICT, HR, Legal Services and Safety. The knowledge articles have been viewed 54,000 times during 2020. To improve service and customer engagement capability, 16 training sessions have been held covering topics on consultation, plain English and simplifying policy and procedural change.

In addition to Service Excellence, the team has supported multiple organisational wide projects including the SAGE Initiative, Reconciliation Action Plan implementation and renewing procurement practices. Almost 600 amendments have been made to improve and simplify policies and procedures, including 50 major reviews. Some policy and procedural amendments were a direct result of the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Renewing procurement practices

USQ continues to review, evolve and improve procurement practices throughout the organisation. During 2020, significant progress was made, including the finalisation of a new policy suite, development of a Corporate Procurement Plan, and ongoing work in the development of a Forward Procurement Plan. 2020 also saw the launch of the new USQ Procurement Hub; an online portal and workflow that improves procurement efficiency and compliance, and delivers a rich data set to inform improved category management and procurement outcomes.

Continuous improvement of contract management processes

Building on the Contract Lifecycle Review undertaken in 2019, USQ undertook stakeholder workshops to define USQ's business needs and provide recommendations for optimising the use of existing software systems. This was undertaken in the context of digitising and automating the contracting process to improve speed, efficiency, visibility, and compliance of legal-document management across the University in line with Divisional business requirements.

USQ development and philanthropy

Through 2020, the USQ Advancement team has focused on support for students at USQ, while also exploring how to grow philanthropic opportunities in support of research and academic positions.

Through this time we have been able to grow the number of specific endowment funds within the University's endowment structure.

We have also connected with a much broader donor community through giving to the Student Emergency Support Fund in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The support generated by our donors (mostly staff) has been substantial and has resulted in the highest number of annual donors to USQ in at least a decade. During 2020, the philanthropy supported more than 80 undergraduate and postgraduate research students.

Of particular note is the establishment of a number of new endowed scholarships and endowed academic prizes. This philanthropic investment is far-reaching, as these investment structures will be able to sustain student awards for 100 years and more.

We continue to grow the endowment balance toward the $10 million goal with the powerful 2:1 provided by Council being a significant driver of giving.

During 2020, we have also implemented the new Raisers Edge NXT system. This is a significant step forward for USQ Advancement, as we are better-able to track giving by donors to ensure that they are appropriately recognised for the significant contributions they make to USQ. We are very thankful for the wonderful gifts from our donors and what their philanthropy does for USQ students.

Objective 3: best practice in resource management

COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic proved a significant driver of increases in digital capability and literacy that are likely to be enduring. Lessons have and will continue to be actively distilled and harnessed to help drive patterns and methods of work and investment benefitting digital strategy and outcomes.

ICT contributions to business continuity during this period spanned security, hardware and support measures. The USQ online security environment benefitted from a raft of measures taken in late-2019 and early-2020, but was also bolstered by perimeter firewall critical systems geo-fencing, remote patching capability (across 2 700 devices) and general correlation of strategy with the Australian Signals Directorate advice. Virtual Private Network (VPN) upgrades ensured sustained critical system remote access, while initially manual processes for remote working and request, approval, and issue and return of additional staff personal computing equipment were rapidly digitised and automated.

Remote support of staff and students continued, with service desk requests peaking at 476 in a single day (March 20), and 25 807 tasks created in the period January 1 to June 30, compared to 22 450 for the same period in 2019. Training webinars were developed and delivered weekly, attracting high levels of attendance (upwards of 100 staff), and complemented by new knowledge articles on the range of remote working tools required and available. Zoom minutes reached 6 million, up from the previous high of 1 million. Exams were also rapidly converted to online and alternative formats, with students and staff supported across 36-hour exam windows.

ICT infrastructure development

Audio-visual upgrades largely focused on collaborative capability and user experience, and the addition of 'Zoom rooms' proximate to Toowoomba and Springfield flight simulators added value to these high-impact learning and teaching spaces. Core network upgrades were also successfully completed.

Enterprise productivity

Service improvement and efficiency benefits of an Enterprise Service Management System continued to be realised during 2020. One year after its official launch, USQHub provides a central and well-accepted location for self-service access to service requests, the Service Catalogue and Knowledge covering all areas of University operations. Expansion of the enterprise licence during 2020 positioned USQ to further leverage capabilities in support of additional functions (procurement, campus security, and identity and asset management) as well as achieving key enterprise systems integrations, including workload allocation and records management. Deployment of the Xtraction module provided more powerful reporting across the suite of Ivanti supported services, reinforcing process redesign and enabling service improvement opportunities.

Roll-out of a new video capture platform provided an improved seamless online classroom experience, achieving 30 000 users, a 450-member-strong community of practice, and more than 12 million minutes of video to mid-year. A successful trial and implementation of streamlined application deployment across enterprise, staff and student devices maintained critical point-in-time access to learning and teaching software, as well as promising productivity benefits. Collaboration demand and tool use also grew significantly in 2020. This required considered action to provide short-term access to staff and external partners, balanced with concern for information management practices in a distributed, collaborative environment.

Digital governance

The University's IT governance was significantly restructured to align with strategic *Academic Plan* and digital workplace imperatives, and to further embed and reinforce 2019 structural changes. This places renewed focus on digitisation, digital fluency, enterprise information management, data and analytics maturity as cross-cutting, immediate and foundational underpinnings of teaching, learning and enterprise goals.

Cyber security

An email gateway solution roll-out, including machine-learning capability, has provided next-generation threat detection, mitigation and response capability as an added layer of defence against spear-phishing attacks. Confidence in the USQ cyber security strategy, controls and response was tested and reinforced by performance in the face of significant threat activity (a 50–70% increase) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Campus development

Campus master planning

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted resourcing and availability of stakeholders to undertake planned campus master planning works during the first half of 2020. In August 2020, the Campus Master Planning process was restarted with a review of previous planning activity to determine currency based on any strategic changes or considerations. Woods Bagot and Urbis were reengaged to partner with USQ in the development of the USQ Campus Master Plan.

USQ infrastructure

In excess of 35 capital projects progressed during 2020, with 28 completed across the calendar year.

- A $1 million upgrade of the USQ Toowoomba quad entry was completed, providing a high-quality and visually identifiable entry to the Toowoomba campus. The project revitalised this space creating new circulation and gathering places and an enhanced entrance to B Block.
- An Aviation precinct was constructed at USQ Toowoomba, in a prominent position with the quad. With a $1.2 million budget, this project provided new facilities to house an operations control room and briefing room, and an installed Airbus A320-type flight simulator.
- The refurbishment of Level 6 in A Block at USQ Springfield created a new office standard for USQ. The $900 000 project created a sophisticated environment with high levels of internal glazing to enhance natural light and provide an engaging and collaborative workspace.
- Two major projects commenced in the second half of 2020, these being: the refurbishment of Level 1 in R Block at USQ Toowoomba; and expansion of F Block at USQ Springfield. The R Block project in Toowoomba will provide a student-focused space centred around the student help zone, iconnect. With a bold new entry structure in the quad, iconnect and student collaborative and computing spaces will be supported internally by a new cafe and self-use kitchenette.
- F Block at USQ Springfield will be expanded to provide an integrated teaching and research space supporting the growth of the School of Civil Engineering and Surveying, and the School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, in collaboration with the Centre for Future Materials.

B Block Toowoomba remodelling

The design stage for the remodelling of B Block at USQ Toowoomba was undertaken in 2020. This project will create new engaging spaces for USQ in the form of an art gallery and function room. These Level 1 spaces will provide interconnected, flexible event zones for a variety of internal and external purposes that will provide greater opportunities for engagement with the wider Toowoomba community. Level 2 of B Block will receive a focused upgrade delivering a more welcoming and efficient office space for the USQ executive team and their visitors.

Externally, a minor upgrade will be completed to the area around B Block to connect visually to the recently completed quad entry, adjacent, and to enhance the building entry.

Strengthening security systems capability

The University's Crisis Management Teams were initially activated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. A Pandemic Preparedness Working Group was subsequently established to coordinate the University's early response and subsequent recovery for return-to-campus activities. Formal crisis management training was deferred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Security systems across all campuses continued to be expanded and improved to increase the safety of students, staff and visitors, and the physical security of the University's infrastructure and assets.

The introduction of the 24/7 security control room has enabled on-campus Security to provide real-time monitoring of all CCTV cameras and electronic access control systems, centralise all security calls through the one operator, and align the University's emergency number '2222' under the Security and Emergency portfolio in Facilities Management. Additionally, the security control room has enabled a more effective and immediate response to all emergencies and improved the escalation of information to senior management during emergencies.

Other security initiatives include the installation of monitored electronic key cabinets in all security offices. This improves efficiencies by allowing access to pre-qualified contractors and staff via their electronic access cards. The installation of hostile vehicle infrastructure on all campuses included bollards, sandstone blocks and other outdoor infrastructure designed to stop hostile or unauthorised vehicles from entering places of mass gatherings.

Financial Statements and Appendices

2020

2020 Summary of Financial Performance

2020 was a very challenging year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic which had such a profound affect domestically and internationally. Throughout 2020, management efforts focussed on responsible financial management of priorities consistent with our mission, and resulted in the delivery of a $12.6M operating surplus in 2020. The balance sheet remained strong with an increase in cash investments, as well as a small increase in net assets. Liquidity is healthy, with a strong current ratio of 2.3. Debt remains very low, with borrowings representing 0.7% of total equity.

Income Statement

Despite the extremely volatile operating environment, USQ's operating surplus was $12.6M representing a 3.6% operating margin. This compares favourably with the original budgeted deficit of $3.9M. The 2020 result is higher than the 2019 surplus ($5.6M) due to increases in revenue and net expenditure savings identified below.

Total income of $345.0M was more than the 2019 result by $17.6M, and was $12.9M higher than the original budget, driven by the following major categories:

Income from Australian Government financial assistance was higher than both 2019 (+$14.2M) and the original 2020 budget (+$11.5M). The outcomes for 2020 were supported by Commonwealth initiatives in relation to the guarantee of the Commonwealth supported student related income as well the establishment of discounted Commonwealth supported short courses, both of which were in response to the impact of the decline in international student revenue across the sector brought about by the pandemic. The University also received additional funding for Commonwealth Research Grants.

Fees and Charges was an area impacted by COVID-19 and included a $4.4M shortfall in planned income from international students and a significant adverse impact on activities such as operation of the residential colleges, on campus commercial activities, and training and retail operations at the Queensland College of Wine Tourism. Overall Fees and Charges were $1.0M less than 2019 and a $7.9M shortfall against the 2020 budget.

Other categories of income include revenue from consultancies and contracts, investment income and other income all exceeded both the 2019 and 2020 budget amounts. Investment income benefited from a $3.9M dividend payment from Education Australia Limited, and other income benefited from the $1.8M refund of payroll tax from the Queensland Government.

Total expenses were $10.6M (3.3%) higher than 2019 and $3.6M (1.1%) lower than the original budget. These movements were driven by the following major categories:

Employee related expenses increased by $14.0M (6.5%) on 2019, primarily driven by salary increases for staff (2.0%), engagement of additional staff to progress a number of strategic initiatives, and a small number of voluntary redundancies in the later part of the year. In total, expenditure for 2020 was $4.1M more than the original budget.

Depreciation and Amortisation had a decrease on both the 2019 actuals ($4.4M) and the original budget ($2.7M). The comprehensive revaluation of assets undertaken late in 2019 included the revision of useful lives, associated increased componentisation of short- and long-lived assets, and revised asset condition ratings. The adoption of this methodology resulted in a $2.7M reduction in the budgeted depreciation expense.

Other Expenses increased by $0.6M on 2019 expenditure and were $4.4M less than the original budget. COVID-19 had a significant impact on travel and professional development activities, with no international travel undertaken post March 2020 and domestic travel generally being restricted. In response to the COVID-19 impact on our students, the University provided $2.4M in student support payments to those who experienced financial distress.

Statement of Financial Position

The Statement of Financial Position reflects the financial strength of the University and its capacity to meet current financial obligations and support investment in strategic priorities.

Net Assets increased by $18.9M (2.7%) driven by a number of factors:

Current assets increased by $25.4M mainly due to increases in cash and cash equivalents and other financial assets as a result of the net cash provided by operating activities.

Non-current assets increased by $4.9M (0.8%). This movement reflects the net increase in the value of shares held in Education Australia Limited and AARNet (collectively $10.3M), capital additions, revaluations, and depreciation and amortisation.

Total liabilities increased by $11.4M and included the deferment of Payroll tax from 2020 to 2021 and 2022, and movements in the carrying value of employee benefits.

Institutional Performance

	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Student Enrolments and Load							
[a]	Total Students	28086	28202	27478	26458	25905	25670	25648
[a]	Total Student Enrolments	28620	28680	28005	26921	26318	26063	26082
	Total Student Load	14385	14726	14557	14241	14016	13655	13969
	Enrolments – Commencing Students	12381	11704	11274	11067	10332	10475	10146
	Enrolments – All Undergraduate	20869	21392	21131	20762	20746	20617	20376
	Enrolments – Higher Degree Research	539	598	691	752	818	871	924
	Enrolments – Higher Degree Coursework	7212	6690	6183	5407	4754	4575	4782
	Postgraduates as % of Total Students	27%	25%	25%	23%	21%	21%	22%
	Load – All Undergraduate	11081	11519	11492	11350	11363	11152	11287
	Load – All Postgraduate	3304	3207	3065	2891	2653	2503	2681
[b]	**Market Share and Student Demand**							
	USQ Share of Queensland Providers enrolments	11.5%	11.4%	11.0%	10.4%	10.0%	9.7%	*
	USQ Share of Australian Distance Education enrolments	9.7%	9.1%	8.3%	7.6%	7.0%	6.5%	*
	USQ Share of International Student enrolments (Australian Providers)	1.4%	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%	*
	USQ Share of Australian graduations	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.2%	1.1%	1.0%	*
	USQ Share of International Distance Education enrolments	32.6%	29.3%	23.2%	16.9%	11.2%	8.7%	*
	USQ Share of Queensland provider Distance Education enrolments	44.6%	43.7%	40.8%	42.2%	39.7%	37.3%	*
[c]	**Client Satisfaction and Teaching Quality**							
[d]	Overall Course Satisfaction (score/5)	3.81	3.82	3.90	3.91	3.90	4.00	4.05
	Australian Graduate Survey							
[e]	CEQ: % Good Teaching Satisfaction	85.1%	88.5%	88.1%	87%	88.8%	88.6%	*
[e]	CEQ: % Generic Skills Satisfaction	93.4%	95.5%	96.0%	95%	95.5%	97.8%	*
[e]	CEQ: % Overall Rating Satisfaction	90.8%	91.3%	91.9%	90%	91.1%	92.9%	*
[f]	GDS: % Graduates in Full-Time Study	10.3%	11.2%	9.3%	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%	*
[g]	GDS: % Graduates in Full-Time Employment	68.3%	80.5%	77.6%	72.8%	76.2%	78.6%	*
[h]	GDS: Median Starting Salary	55000	63000	65700	67700	69400	70700	*
[i]	GDS: % Graduates Seeking FT Employment	14.4%	9.7%	15.8%	20.6%	21.7%	19.4%	*
	Student Performance							
[j]	Student Retention	77.9%	76.4%	75.3%	77.6%	78.6%	80.3%	*
[k]	Course Progression rate	78.0%	77.9%	78.6%	77.9%	78.4%	79.2%	*
	Student Completions	4573	4599	4472	4096	4003	3681	*

Institutional Performance cont'd

	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Flexibility							
	% Enrolments Internal	12.6%	13.4%	13.9%	11.7%	11.9%	11.9%	10.0%
	% Enrolments External	72.6%	70.2%	70.1%	68.6%	66.9%	66.0%	67.9%
	% Enrolments Multi-Modal	14.8%	16.4%	16.0%	19.8%	21.2%	22.0%	22.1%
	Web-Based Subjects Offered	254	339	416	994	1033	1055	1057
	Web-Based Student Enrolments in Courses	19550	27969	26705	66900	64455	62086	65891
	Enrolment Trends							
	Enrolment Density (= Ratio of Enrolments to Load)	1.95	1.92	1.89	1.86	1.85	1.88	1.84
	Median Age of Students	29	29	29	29	29	29	30
[l]	**Research and research higher degrees**							
	Research Completions – PhD + Research Masters	70	60	85	78	84	104	*
	Staff							
[m]	Staff FTE – Academic (FT & FFT)	489	529	548	580	591	587	592
[m]	Staff FTE – General (FT & FFT)	894	959	991	969	897	896	866
	Casual Staff FTE	300	307	313	300	300	281	281
	Student Staff Ratio (EFTS:FTE)	21.9	22.0	21.1	20.6	20.6	20.7	20.7
	% Academic Staff with PhD	67%	67%	67%	70%	67%	68%	67%
	% Academic Staff with Higher Degree	89%	88%	88%	89%	85%	86%	85%
	Staff Separation Rate (%)	5%	5%	8%	6%	8%	7%	4%
	Mean Age of Staff – Academic	50	50	51	51	50	50	50
	Mean Age of Staff – General	43	44	44	43	43	44	44
	% Academic Staff who are Female	52%	50%	50%	50%	52%	53%	53%
	% Senior Staff who are Female	25%	27%	28%	26%	26%	32%	32%
	% Staff covered by Collective Bargaining Agreements	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%
[n]	**Health and Safety**							
[o]	Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR)	4.27	5.30	3.42	5.49	5.29	4.17	2.67
	Occupational Disease Rate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
[p]	Lost Work Day Rate	43.23	21.07	58.26	28.56	32.98	8.61	12.69
	Fatalities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
[q]	New Workers Compensation Claims	32	27	41	19	27	24	20
[r]	Average Days to Return to Work	13.29	12.40	8.00	11.21	4.00	9.00	2.67
[s]	Average paid Days	12.56	42.25	34.21	18.29	10.67	20.60	2.5
	Internationalisation							
	Market Breadth 1: Number Countries Serviced	94	88	86	86	90	96	90
	Market Breadth 2: # Countries Accounting for 80%	13	12	12	11	11	11	11
	International Student Load	2820	2636	2217	2058	1933	1863	1807

Institutional Performance cont'd

	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Equity and Multiculturalism							
	Females as % of Total Students (Domestic)	56.7%	56.8%	56.2%	57.3%	57.8%	58.2%	58.7%
	Females as % of Commencing Students (Domestic)	58.2%	58.2%	56.9%	59.8%	59.2%	59.1%	60.1%
	% of Females in Engineering (Domestic)	10.2%	9.8%	10.2%	10.1%	9.9%	10.1%	11.6%
	Enrolments – Indigenous Students	2.5%	2.8%	2.9%	3.0%	3.2%	3.5%	3.8%
	Indigenous Student Progression (Pass Rate Parity)	82.3%	79.1%	78.7%	81.4%	82.8%	86.7%	*
[t]	Enrolments – People with Disabilities	1534	1620	1708	1798	1741	1737	1928
	% of Students Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	28.4%	28.9%	27.8%	28.3%	28.6%	28.4%	27.3%

* Data not available at time of publication or lags a year behind

[a] Reporting headcount and student - level of program count for consistency with reporting counts a level of program

[b] Market share is based on enrolments

[c] Client satisfaction is from data taken from USQ's internal Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) course survey; and the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) national survey of graduates. Graduate Outcomes are assessed using the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) conducted by all universities; and a survey of employers of USQ graduates conducted by USQ

[d] Ratings are from students undertaking courses using a 5 point scale to indicate their response to the comment: "Overall, I am satisfied with this course"

[e] The CEQ percentages shown above are the proportion of all respondents that broadly agreed with the items on the two CEQ scales and the Overall Satisfaction Index. Respondents indicated broad agreement by rating the scale item as 3, 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale. The percentages shown are derived from figures supplied by GCCA which consisted of the percentage of graduates in each qualification level and broad area of study that rated the scale as 3, 4 or 5

[f] These are Australian first-degree graduates in further full-time study

[g] This is the number of Australian first-degree graduates in full-time employment as a percentage of those available for full-time employment. 2015 figures are based on the new GOS survey. Labour Force Indicators are based on a new set of principles

[h] These are Australian bachelor degree graduates who were in their first full-time job

[i] The number of Australian first degree graduates in part-time employment or unemployed seeking full-time as a percentage of those available for full-time employment

[j] Retention Rate Calculation: (Continuing Yr2) / (Total Yr1 – Grads End Yr1)

[k] Progression Rate calculations exclude Non award students

[l] 2017 Research outputs not completed or verified until June meeting of HDREC

[m] FTE refers to Full-Time staff Equivalents

[n] All system rules are applied, reported and recorded in respect with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (QLD) and Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 (QLD)

[0] LTIFR = (number of injuries x 1 000 000) / total hours worked

[p] Lost work day rate = (total lost work days/total hours worked) x 200000

[q] New statutory claims: The number of new statutory claims that have been registered during a given financial year, irrespective of the claimants' accident dates

[r] Average days to first return to work: The average number of days taken to secure any form of return to work, where the return occurs within the reporting period. Only time loss claims are included in this calculation

[s] Average paid days: The number of paid days(partial or total) on a statutory claim divided by the number of new statutory claims, in a given financial year

[t] Enrolments are based on all students including domestic and international

Note: Some data may have changed slightly from the previous Annual Report due to back dated student withdrawals or similar. If you require additional information, please contact the Editor.

General Statistics

STUDENT LOAD (EFTSL)*	2018	2019	2020
Attendance			
On Campus	4737.4	4640.8	4310.0
External/Online	9278.2	9013.8	9658.7
Commencement Status			
Commencing	5267.2	5178.6	5003.7
Continuing	8748.4	8476.0	8964.9
Discipline Area			
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	82.8	68.5	90.3
Architecture and Building	34.5	33.3	36.0
Creative Arts	945.0	893.6	849.0
Education	2178.1	2142.3	2285.4
Engineering and Related Technologies	1529.9	1483.1	1478.5
Health	2512.4	2547.3	2725.7
Information Technology	1099.6	966.1	882.3
Management and Commerce	1510.3	1369.8	1285.5
Natural and Physical Sciences	1566.1	1563.8	1645.9
Society and Culture	2250.5	2325.9	2423.9
Mixed Field Programmes	306.5	261.0	266.3
Program Level			
Higher Degree Research	501.9	526.8	556.0
Higher Degree Coursework	1734.1	1614.3	1707.8
Other Postgraduate	414.1	357.5	415.0
Bachelor	9419.8	9301.4	9407.0
Other Undergraduate	527.1	509.5	575.9
Enabling	1298.4	1212.9	1198.0
Cross-institutional	46.5	40.9	25.9
Non-Award	73.7	91.4	83.1
Funding Source			
Commonwealth Funded	11085.9	10774.8	11098.5
Domestic Fee-paying	644.6	652.6	674.3
International	1928.6	1857.6	1802.8
Research Training Program	356.5	369.6	393.1
TOTAL STUDENT LOAD	**14015.6**	**13654.6**	**13968.7**

Note:

* Figures show the EFTSL for the full year, based on annual submissions to The Department of Education

STUDENT ENROLMENTS*	2018	2019	2020
Gender			
Female	14321	14498	14814
Male	11562	11141	10792
Indeterminate/Unspecified	22	31	42
Attendance Mode			
On Campus – Toowoomba	4390	4184	3843
On Campus – Springfield	2199	2305	2097
On Campus – Ipswich	1986	2235	2291
External / Online	17330	16946	17417
Commencement Status			
Commencing	10300	10441	10110
Continuing	15605	15229	15538
Field of Education			
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies			15
Architecture and Building	99	109	116
Creative Arts	3036	3360	3134
Education	4118	3903	4065
Engineering and Related Technologies	3701	3649	3662
Health	3683	3838	4063
Information Technology	1223	1107	960
Management and Commerce	4062	3701	3252
Natural and Physical Sciences	1833	1914	1975
Society and Culture	3546	3452	3736
Non-Award	403	512	536
Mixed Field Programmes	201	125	134
Program Level			
Higher Degree Research	814	869	921
Higher Degree Coursework	3420	3371	3450
Other Postgraduate	1295	1151	1304
Bachelor	15247	15167	14949
Other Undergraduate	1341	1317	1415
Cross-institutional	305	251	164
Enabling / Non-award	3483	3544	3445
International			
Offshore	507	474	451
On-campus	2339	2323	1997
Australian	23059	22873	23200
Indigenous			
Indigenous	730	808	886
Non-Indigenous	25175	24862	24762
TOTAL STUDENT ENROLMENTS	**25905**	**25670**	**25648**

*Figures show the headcount of students for the full year, based on annual submissions to The Department of Education

General Statistics cont'd

STAFF (FTE)	2018	2019	2020
ALL STAFF			
Gender			
Female	1030	1046	1027
Male	744	718	712
Classification			
Academic Staff	798	789	794
General Staff	976	975	945
Current Duties Term			
Tenured	1140	1167	1138
Limited Term	348	316	320
Other Term			
Casual	285	281	281
TOTAL STAFF	**1773**	**1764**	**1739**
ACADEMIC STAFF			
Faculty			
Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts	347	332	333
Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences	241	249	259
Open Access College	37	39	39
College for Indigenous Study, Education and Research	9	15	15
Non-faculty	163	155	149
Level			
Above Senior Lecturer	139	142	151
Senior Lecturer (C)	155	151	136
Lecturer (B)	254	250	257
Lecturer (A)	250	247	249
TOTAL ACADEMIC STAFF	**798**	**789**	**794**

Notes:

1. FTE indicates Full-Time Equivalence of full-time, fractional full-time and casual staff
2. Casual staff numbers are estimates provided on June 30 each year.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Income Statement
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Revenue and Income from continuing operations			
Australian Government financial assistance			
Australian Government grants	2.1	166,806	156,659
HELP-Australian Government payments	2.1	86,821	82,780
State and Local Government financial assistance	2.2	3,823	4,214
HECS-HELP student payments		7,948	7,487
Fees and charges	2.3	58,424	59,437
Royalties, trademarks and licences		46	56
Consultancy and contracts	2.4	8,016	7,873
Other revenue	2.5	6,596	3,927
Investment income	3	6,462	4,892
Gain on disposal of assets		30	34
Total revenue and income from continuing operations		**344,972**	**327,359**
Expenses from continuing operations			
Employee related expenses	4	229,727	215,716
Depreciation and amortisation	5	17,442	21,795
Repairs and maintenance	6	5,162	5,076
Borrowing costs		417	443
Impairment of assets		503	163
Other expenses	7	79,141	78,586
Total expenses from continuing operations		**332,392**	**321,779**
Net result from continuing operations		**12,580**	**5,580**

The above Income Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Statement of Comprehensive Income
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Net result from continuing operations		**12,580**	**5,580**
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss:			
Gain on equity instruments designated at fair value through other comprehensive income ('FVOCI')	18(a)	10,333	16,616
Gain/(loss) on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	18(b)	(4,007)	90,000
Total comprehensive income		**18,906**	**112,196**

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The above Statement of Comprehensive Income should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Statement of Financial Position
as at 31 December 2020

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	8	45,555	18,575
Receivables	9	4,907	3,337
Contract assets	9	7,655	7,461
Inventories		998	1,132
Other financial assets	10	145,000	149,503
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	11	868	-
Other non-financial assets	12	10,924	10,542
Total current assets		**215,907**	**190,550**
Non–current assets			
Other financial assets	10	55,805	45,472
Property, plant and equipment	13	554,698	559,086
Intangible assets	14	2,706	4,259
Other non-financial assets	12	1,454	941
Total non–current assets		**614,663**	**609,758**
Total assets		**830,570**	**800,308**
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	15	22,107	15,603
Borrowings	16	1,553	2,556
Provisions	17	39,300	33,632
Other liabilities		622	1,055
Contract liabilities	15	28,644	29,108
Total current liabilities		**92,226**	**81,954**
Non–current liabilities			
Trade and other Payable	15	2,935	-
Borrowings	16	3,785	6,262
Provisions	17	9,924	9,298
Total non–current liabilities		**16,644**	**15,560**
Total liabilities		**108,870**	**97,514**
Net assets		**721,700**	**702,794**
EQUITY			
Reserves	18	295,763	289,437
Retained earnings		425,937	413,357
Total equity		**721,700**	**702,794**

The above Statement of Financial Position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Statement of Changes in Equity
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	Note	Reserves $'000	Retained Earnings $'000	Total $'000
Balance at 1 January 2019		**182,821**	**428,145**	**610,966**
Retrospective changes (i)		-	(20,368)	(20,368)
Balance as restated		**182,821**	**407,777**	**590,598**
Net result		-	5,580	5,580
Gain on equity instruments designated at FVOCI	18(a)	16,616	-	16,616
Gain on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	18(b)	90,000	-	90,000
Total comprehensive income		106,616	5,580	112,196
Balance at 31 December 2019		**289,437**	**413,357**	**702,794**
Balance at 1 January 2020		**289,437**	**413,357**	**702,794**
Net result		-	12,580	12,580
Gain on equity instruments designated at FVOCI	18(a)	10,333	-	10,333
Gain/(loss) on revaluation of property, plant and equipment	18(b)	(4,007)	-	(4,007)
Total comprehensive income		6,326	12,580	18,906
Balance at 31 December 2020		**295,763**	**425,937**	**721,700**

(i) Adoption of AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* on 1 January 2019

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Statement of Cash Flows
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Australian Government grants		241,506	241,272
OS – HELP (net)	28(g)	245	66
State Government grants		4,359	4,337
Local Government grants		105	145
HECS - HELP - student payments		8,180	7,348
Receipts from student fees and other customers		78,512	74,507
Interest received		3,080	5,123
Dividends received		4,450	1,900
Finance costs		(417)	(443)
Payments to suppliers and employees (incl. GST)		(296,439)	(304,724)
GST paid		(973)	(46)
Net cash provided by operating activities	26	**42,608**	**29,485**
Cash flows from investing activities			
Receipts/(payments) for financial assets		4,503	(13,001)
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		379	469
Payments for property, plant and equipment		(17,030)	(13,411)
Payments for intangible assets		-	(251)
Net cash used in investing activities		**(12,148)**	**(26,194)**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Repayment of lease liabilities		(1,085)	(69)
Repayment of borrowings		(2,395)	(2,269)
Net cash used in financing activities		**(3,480)**	**(2,338)**
Net Increase in cash and cash equivalents		**26,980**	**953**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		18,575	17,622
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	8	**45,555**	**18,575**

The above Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

Note 1 Summary of significant accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all years reported unless otherwise stated.

The University of Southern Queensland is a Higher Education Provider established under the *University of Southern Queensland Act 1998* and is a statutory body as defined in the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*. The University of Southern Queensland is domiciled in Australia with a principal address of West Street, Toowoomba.

a) Basis of preparation

These annual financial statements represent the audited general purpose financial statements of the University. They have been prepared on an accrual basis and comply with the Australian Accounting Standards and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board. The University applies Tier 1 reporting requirements.

Additionally, these statements have been prepared in accordance with the following statutory requirements:

- *Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Financial Statement Guidelines)*
- *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019* issued pursuant to the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*
- *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*

The University is a not-for-profit entity and these financial statements have been prepared on that basis. Some of the Australian Accounting Standards requirements for not-for-profit entities are inconsistent with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) requirements.

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Date of authorisation of issue

These financial statements were authorised for issue by the University Council on 22nd February 2021.

Historical cost convention

These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, except for equity financial assets and certain classes of property, plant and equipment that have been measured at fair value through other comprehensive income.

Critical accounting estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Australian Accounting Standards requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the University's accounting policies. The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The areas involving a higher degree of judgement or complexity, or areas where assumptions and estimates are significant to the financial statements are disclosed below:

Timing of revenue/income recognition
Judgement is required to determine whether material contracts have enforceable and sufficiently specific performance obligations per AASB 15, and if so, the timing (recognition of revenue in the Income Statement) of satisfaction of those obligations. Refer notes 2.1 to 2.5.

Depreciation of plant and equipment
An estimate of the useful lives of assets is used to calculate annual depreciation expense. An increase/(decrease) in lives would result in a lower/(higher) annual expense recognised in the Income Statement. Estimates of lives involve an assessment of the period of time an asset is expected to be available for use by the University. Refer note 5.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

Investments in equity instruments
The fair value of investments in equity instruments must be estimated for recognition, measurement and disclosure purposes. An increase/(decrease) in fair value would result in an increase/(decrease) in net assets and equity. Refer note 10.

Property, plant and equipment
The fair value of land, buildings and infrastructure assets must be estimated for recognition, measurement and disclosure purposes. An increase/(decrease) in fair value would result in an increase/(decrease) in net assets and equity. Refer note 13.

Provisions
Employee provisions are estimated by applying probability percentages to leave balances at the end of the reporting period, estimating future wages increases and on-costs and applying discount rates to determine present value. Changes to any of these variables will change employee benefits expense in the Income Statement. Refer note 17.

b) Income Tax

The University is exempt from Australian income tax under the provisions of Division 50 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.*

c) Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of associated GST, unless the GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). In this case, it is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the statement of financial position.

Cash flows are presented on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing or financing activities which are recoverable from or payable to the ATO, are presented as operating cash flows.

d) Controlled entities

University of Southern Queensland (South Africa) Pty Ltd was incorporated on 16/02/2000 to meet South African legislative requirements in order to deliver higher education programs in that country. The company has never traded and holds no assets or liabilities.

e) Joint venture

The University is a 50% joint venture partner with the Queensland Department of Education in the Queensland College of Wine Tourism. Due to the immaterial effect of applying equity accounting, 100% of the assets, liabilities, income and expenses of the joint venture have been consolidated into these financial statements.

Separate special purpose financial statements are prepared for the joint venture and audited annually by the Queensland Audit Office.

f) Comparative amounts

Where necessary, comparative information has been reclassified to enhance comparability in respect of changes in presentation adopted in the current year.

g) Rounding of amounts

Amounts in the financial statements have been rounded off to the nearest thousand dollars.

h) New accounting standards and interpretations

New accounting standards issued but not yet mandatory for the 31 December 2020 reporting period, have been assessed as having no material implications for the University and an election to early adopt has not been made.

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Note 2.1 Australian Government financial assistance including Australian Government Loan Programs (HELP)			
(a) Commonwealth Grant Scheme and Other Grants	28(a)		
Commonwealth Grant Scheme (i)		138,402	130,737
Access and Participation Fund		4,871	5,042
Indigenous Student Success Program		1,926	1,994
Disability Performance Funding		99	98
Total Commonwealth Grant Scheme and Other Grants		**145,298**	**137,871**
(b) Higher Education Loan Programs	28(b)		
HECS–HELP		72,796	69,856
FEE-HELP		11,485	10,489
SA-HELP	28(h)	2,540	2,435
Total Higher Education Loan Programs		**86,821**	**82,780**
(c) EDUCATION Research	28(c)		
Research Training Program		5,569	5,310
Research Support Program		3,705	3,307
Total EDUCATION Research Grants		**9,274**	**8,617**
(d) Other Capital Funding	28(e)		
Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities Grant		16	183
Total Other Capital Funding		**16**	**183**
(e) Australian Research Council	28(f)		
Discovery Projects		823	620
Linkage Projects		113	67
Total Australian Research Council		**936**	**687**
(f) Other Australian Government financial assistance			
Capital			
Other Commonwealth		-	500
Total Capital		-	500
Non-Capital			
Commonwealth research		11,204	8,741
Other Commonwealth		78	60
Total Non-Capital		11,282	8,801
Total Other Australian Government financial assistance		**11,282**	**9,301**
Total Australian Government financial assistance		**253,627**	**239,439**

(i) Includes receipts under the Higher Education Relief Package which guaranteed funding in 2020 for CGS places, irrespective of enrolment changes, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Accounting Policy

Commonwealth Grants Scheme (CGS) and Other Grants

CGS funding for student places is recognised as revenue under AASB 15 over time, as and when the course is delivered to students across each semester. The regional and enabling loading components of the CGS and the portion relating to the CGS funding guarantee under the Higher Education Relief Package, are recognised as income in accordance with AASB 1058 when the funding is received.

Revenue from the Access and Participation Fund is recognised under AASB 15 over time as the tailored activities are delivered to students.

The agreements for the Indigenous Student Success Program and for Disability Performance Funding do not contain sufficiently specific performance obligations to be assessed as revenue under AASB 15. Income is therefore recognised in accordance with AASB 1058 when the grant is received.

Higher Education Loan Programs
These programs assist students to pay their course fees and as such revenue is recognised under AASB 15 over time, as and when the course is delivered to students across each semester.

Education Research
Specific performance obligations have not been identified for either the Research Training or Research Support Programs. Income is therefore recognised under AASB 1058 when the grant is received.

Australian Research Council (ARC)
Funding from the ARC has been assessed as meeting the enforceability and sufficiently specific criteria of AASB 15. Revenue is recognised over time as the research activities are performed and access to research findings are made available to the funding body. Costs incurred are used to measure progress towards satisfaction of the performance obligation.

Capital funding
Australian Government capital funding is recognised as income under AASB 1058 as the non-financial asset is acquired or constructed.

Other Australian Grants
Other grants are assessed individually. If the agreement is considered to be enforceable and to have sufficiently specific performance obligations, revenue is recognised under AASB 15 over time as the services or research activities are performed. Costs incurred are used to measure progress towards satisfaction of the performance obligation. Otherwise, income is recognised under AASB 1058 at fair value when the University obtains control of the right to receive the grant, it is probable that economic benefits will flow to the University and they can be reliably measured.

Note 2.2 State and Local Government financial assistance

Non-Capital		
State Government research grants	2,916	3,664
Local Government research grants	105	145
Other State Government grants	802	405
Total State and Local Government financial assistance	**3,823**	**4,214**

Accounting Policy

Agreements for funding received from State and Local Governments are assessed individually. If the agreement is considered to be enforceable and to have sufficiently specific performance obligations, revenue is recognised under AASB 15 over time as the services or research activities are performed.

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Costs incurred are used to measure progress towards satisfaction of the performance obligation. Otherwise, income is recognised under AASB 1058 at fair value when the University obtains control of the right to receive the grant, it is probable that economic benefits will flow to the University and they can be reliably measured.

Note 2.3 Fees and Charges

Course fees and charges			
Fee paying onshore overseas students		40,301	37,074
Fee paying offshore overseas students		8,405	9,650
Continuing education		102	85
Fee paying domestic postgraduate students		2,483	2,572
Fee paying domestic undergraduate students		159	163
Fee paying domestic non award students		44	27
Other domestic course fees and charges		120	231
Total course fees and charges		51,614	49,802
Other non-course fees and charges			
Student services and amenities fees from students	28(h)	1,063	988
General sales and services		735	807
Residential colleges sales (i)		1,053	2,302
Bookshop sales		2,050	2,680
Other organisational units sales (i)		1,909	2,858
Total other fees and charges		6,810	9,635
Total fees and charges		**58,424**	**59,437**

(i) Revenues were significantly impacted by COVID-19 in 2020.

Accounting Policy

Course fees and charges

Course fees and charges relates to undergraduate programs, graduate and professional degree programs and continuing education. Revenue is recognised under AASB 15 over time, as and when the course is delivered to students across each semester. The University uses an input method (time elapsed) to measure progress towards satisfaction of the performance obligation.

If courses have been paid in advance by students or by the government, the University recognises a contract liability until the services are delivered.

Non-course fees and charges

Revenue from student services and amenities fees is recognised under AASB 15 over time, as and when the amenities are provided to the student. The University uses an input method (time elapsed) to measure progress towards satisfaction of the performance obligation.

Commercial sales and services from the University's bookshop, printery and residential colleges are recognised under AASB 15 at a point in time when the goods or services are provided.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Note 2.4 Consultancy and contracts

Consultancy	1,700	1,492
Contract research	6,316	6,381
Total consultancy and contracts	**8,016**	**7,873**

Accounting Policy

Consultancy and research agreements are assessed individually. If the agreement is considered to be enforceable and to have sufficiently specific performance obligations, revenue is recognised under AASB 15 over time as the services or research activities are performed. Costs incurred are used to measure progress towards satisfaction of the performance obligation. Otherwise, income is recognised under AASB 1058 at fair value when the University obtains control of the right to receive the funds, it is probable that economic benefits will flow to the University and they can be reliably measured.

Note 2.5 Other revenue and income

Discounts received	58	63
Donations and bequests	363	55
Facilities hire	379	538
Franking credits	1,665	244
Global Learning Programs (i)	316	997
Non-government grants	11	3
Rebates, subsidies and recoveries (ii)	3,164	958
Scholarships and prizes	70	74
Other	570	995
Total other revenue	**6,596**	**3,927**

(i) International travel restrictions significantly affected income earned for this program in 2020.

(ii) Includes $1.8M in COVID-19 Payroll Tax Relief from the State Government.

Accounting Policy

Donations and bequests and the State Government COVID Relief payment are recognised as income under AASB 1058 immediately on receipt. Other revenue is recognised under AASB 15 at the point in time the transaction is completed.

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Note 2.6 Reconciliation of revenue and income			
Total Australian Government financial assistance including Australian Government loan programs (HELP)	2.1	253,627	239,439
Total State and Local Government financial assistance	2.2	3,823	4,214
HECS-HELP student payments		7,948	7,487
Total fees and charges	2.3	58,424	59,437
Total royalties, trademarks and licences		46	56
Total consultancy and contract fees	2.4	8,016	7,873
Total other revenue and income	2.5	6,596	3,927
Total		**338,480**	**322,433**
Total revenue from contracts with customers as per AASB 15		315,528	302,906
Total income of not-for-profit as per AASB 1058		22,952	19,527
Total		**338,480**	**322,433**

Note 3 Investment income		
Interest - Other financial assets at amortised cost	2,582	4,322
Dividends - Equity instruments designated at FVOCI	3,880	570
Net investment revenue	**6,462**	**4,892**

86 **Accounting policy**

Interest income is recognised as it accrues.

Dividend income is recognised when the right to receive payment is established (generally when shareholders approve the dividend), it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the dividend will flow to the entity and the amount of the dividend can be measured reliably.

Note 4 Employee related expenses		
Academic		
Salaries	85,341	77,579
Contributions to funded superannuation and pension schemes	13,614	13,072
Payroll tax	5,129	4,791
Worker's compensation	244	265
Long service leave expense	3,226	2,059
Annual leave	7,328	6,930
Total academic	114,882	104,696
Non–academic		
Salaries	85,340	82,164
Contributions to funded superannuation and pension schemes	13,449	13,644
Payroll tax	5,075	5,038
Worker's compensation	254	278
Long service leave expense	2,981	2,004
Annual leave	7,746	7,892
Total non–academic	114,845	111,020
Total employee related expenses	**229,727**	**215,716**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Accounting policy

Payments to superannuation plans are expensed as incurred.

The UniSuper Defined Benefit Division is the predominant plan within the University. It is deemed to be a Defined Contribution Plan under Australian Accounting Standards. The University's obligation is limited to fixed contributions expensed each period.

Note 5 Depreciation and amortisation

Depreciation - property, plant and equipment	13	15,889	20,223
Amortisation - intangible assets	14	1,553	1,572
Total depreciation and amortisation		**17,442**	**21,795**

Accounting policy

Depreciation

Construction work in progress, land and heritage and cultural assets are not depreciated. All other assets are depreciated from the month of acquisition or, in respect of assets constructed, from the time the asset is complete and ready for use. Depreciation is calculated using the straight-line method to allocate their cost or revalued amount, net of residual values, over their estimated useful lives.

Annual depreciation rates, which have not changed since the previous year, are as follows:

Buildings	1%-10%
Infrastructure	1%-10%
Plant & equipment	
Computer equipment	20%
Motor vehicles	20%
Other plant	10%

Right-of-use assets and leasehold improvements are depreciated/amortised over the shorter of the lease term and the useful life of the improvement or the lease period.

Amortisation

Intangible assets (software costs) are amortised from the point at which the asset is ready for use on a straight-line basis over a 5 year estimated useful life with zero residual value.

Note 6 Repairs and maintenance

Buildings	1,594	1,779
Other	3,568	3,297
Total repairs and maintenance	**5,162**	**5,076**

	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Note 7 Other expenses

Advertising, marketing and promotional expenses	4,978	3,231
Cleaning materials and services	2,312	2,363
Commissions	2,196	2,769
Cost of goods sold	2,021	2,387
Information technology expenses	8,480	8,014
Losses – public moneys	-	10
Non-capitalised equipment	5,009	3,894
Printing, copying and stationery	1,159	1,409
Professional and consultancy fees	7,698	8,135
Research expenditure and grants contributions	3,198	1,524
Scholarships, grants and prizes	10,024	9,307
Special Payments - ex gratia payments (i)	31	344
- out of court settlement (ii)	-	2
Student activity costs (iii)	2,716	827
Teaching materials and services	13,336	13,821
Telecommunications	1,067	1,226
Travel, entertainment and staff recruitment and development	4,198	7,422
Utilities and services	6,288	6,999
Other	4,430	4,902
Total other expenses	**79,141**	**78,586**

(i) Payments on termination of employment
(ii) Payment to fee for service customer (2019)
(iii) 2020 includes spending on a COVID-19 Student Support Package

Accounting policy

Special payments include ex-gratia expenditure and other expenditure that the University is not contractually or legally obligated to make to other parties. In compliance with the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*, the University maintains a register setting out the details of all special payments greater than $5,000. The total of all special payments (including those of $5,000 or less) is disclosed in the above note.

Note 8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash at bank	13,081	8,246
Cash on hand	35	38
Deposits at call	32,439	10,291
Total cash and cash equivalents	**45,555**	**18,575**

Cash on hand is non-interest bearing. Cash at bank earns interest at floating rates based on daily bank deposits rates. Deposits at call earn interest at a weighted average floating interest rate of 1.35% (2019 – 2.04%).

Accounting policy

For statement of cash flows presentation purposes, cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with financial institutions and other short-term, highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Note 9 Receivables and contract assets		
General and student receivables		
General receivables	4,574	5,181
Student receivables	1,347	641
Less: allowance for expected credit loss	(73)	(55)
Total general and student receivables	5,848	5,767
Other receivables		
Net GST receivable	2,447	1,474
Accrued revenue	4,267	3,557
Total other receivables	6,714	5,031
Total receivables	**12,562**	**10,798**
Contract Assets	**7,655**	**7,461**

Contract assets represent trade and other receivables where the University has the right to consideration for goods and services conditional upon satisfaction of contract performance obligations.

Accounting policy

Classification and measurement
Trade receivables are held to collect contractual cash flows and give rise to cash flows representing solely payments of principal and interest. These are classified and measured as debt instruments at amortised cost.

Student trade receivables are due for settlement no more than 30 days from the date of recognition or in accordance with contract conditions.

Impairment
A simplified impairment approach is adopted to calculate expected credit losses (ECL's). Therefore, the University does not track credit risk, but instead recognises a loss allowance based on lifetime ECL's at each reporting date. A provision matrix has been established, based on historical credit loss experience and adjusted for forward-looking factors specific to the debtors and the economic environment.

Note 10 Other financial assets		
Current		
Other financial assets at amortised cost	145,000	149,503
Total current other financial assets	**145,000**	**149,503**
Non-current		
Investments in equity instruments designated at FVOCI	55,805	45,472
Total non-current other financial assets	**55,805**	**45,472**

Current other financial assets comprise short term deposits invested for periods of greater than 90 days and less than 12 months depending on the immediate cash requirements of the University and bear fixed interest rates ranging between 0.45% and 1.6% (2019 – 1.58% and 2.60%).

	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Non-current financial assets comprise:

(i) 10,000 ordinary shares in Education Australia Limited, an unlisted company owned by 38 Australian universities which holds a material investment in IDP Australia Limited, a public company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange.

(ii) Two ordinary shares in AARNet Pty Limited, a not-for-profit private company owned by 38 Australian Universities and the CSIRO.

The University has determined the fair value of the above investments with the assistance of an independent valuer. Note 20(c) provides information about the valuation techniques adopted in determining fair values.

Accounting policy

Classification

The University has the following categories of financial assets; amortised cost through profit and loss and fair value through other comprehensive income. The classification depends on the financial asset's contractual cash flow characteristics and the University's business model for managing them.

Financial assets at amortised cost

The University's financial assets at amortised cost include cash and cash equivalents, trade receivables and short-term bank deposits. These assets are subsequently measured using the effective interest method and are subject to impairment. Gains and losses are recognised in profit or loss when the asset is derecognised, modified or impaired.

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Investments in equity instruments designated at FVOCI

The University has elected to classify, irrevocably, its non-listed equity investments under this category as they meet the definition of equity under AASB 132 *Financial Instruments: Presentation* and are not held for trading.

Dividends are recognised as other income in the income statement when the right of payment has been established, except when the University benefits from such proceeds as a recovery of part of the cost of the financial asset, in which case, such gains are recorded in OCI.

Equity instruments designated at FVOCI are not subject to impairment assessment.

Note 11 Non-current assets classified as held for sale

Plant and equipment	868	-
	868	-

Following the University's strategic decision to cease its printery operations, assets not required for other University activities have been reclassified as available for sale and are expected to be sold within the next 12 months. An impairment expense of $0.3M has been recognised for printery assets prior to reclassification.

Accounting policy

Non-current assets are classified as available for sale if their carrying amount will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through continued use. These assets are valued at the lower of their carrying amount and fair value less costs of disposal. An impairment loss is recognised for any write down to fair value less disposal costs immediately prior to the reclassification.

No depreciation is calculated while assets are classified as held for sale.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
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	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Note 12 Other non-financial assets		
Current		
Prepayments	10,924	10,542
Total current other non-financial assets	**10,924**	**10,542**
Non-current		
Prepayments	1,454	941
Total non-current other non-financial assets	**1,454**	**941**

Accounting Policy

A prepayment is recognised as an asset when payments for goods or services have been made in advance of the University obtaining the right to access those goods or services.

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Note 13 Property, plant and equipment

	Construction work in progress	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure	Heritage & cultural assets	Leasehold improvements	Plant & Equipment #	Sub-total Property, Plant & Equipment (owned)	Right-Of-Use Assets	Total
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
At 1 January 2019										
Cost	1,176	-	-	-	-	2,001	49,224	52,401	-	52,401
Valuation	-	41,658	585,722	53,572	2,217	-	-	683,169	-	683,169
Accumulated depreciation	-	-	(215,387)	(14,421)	-	(201)	(30,915)	(260,924)	-	(260,924)
Net book amount	1,176	41,658	370,335	39,151	2,217	1,800	18,309	474,646	-	474,646
Year ended 31 December 2019										
Opening net book amount	1,176	41,658	370,335	39,151	2,217	1,800	18,309	474,646	-	474,646
Revaluation gain (18(b))	-	2,813	84,664	2,341	182	-	-	90,000	-	90,000
Adoption of AASB 16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	387	387
Additions	8,815	-	-	-	-	-	4,631	13,446	1,300	14,746
Disposals/write downs	(35)	-	-	-	-	-	(435)	(470)	-	(470)
Transfers	(3,941)	-	2,838	1,090	-	13	-	-	-	-
Depreciation charge (5)	-	-	(14,336)	(1,452)	-	(60)	(4,290)	(20,138)	(85)	(20,223)
Closing net book amount	**6,015**	**44,471**	**443,501**	**41,130**	**2,399**	**1,753**	**18,215**	**557,484**	**1,602**	**559,086**
As at 31 December 2019										
Cost	6,015	-	-	-	-	2,013	52,886	60,914	1,687	62,601
Valuation	-	44,471	598,483	53,923	2,399	-	-	699,276	-	699,276
Accumulated depreciation	-	-	(154,982)	(12,793)	-	(260)	(34,671)	(202,706)	(85)	(202,791)
Net book amount	**6,015**	**44,471**	**443,501**	**41,130**	**2,399**	**1,753**	**18,215**	**557,484**	**1,602**	**559,086**

Plant and equipment includes all operational assets; computer equipment, motor vehicle and general plant

	Construction work in progress	Land	Buildings	Infrastructure	Heritage & cultural assets	Leasehold improvements	Plant & Equipment #	Sub-total Property, Plant & Equipment (owned)	Right-Of-Use Assets	Total
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Year ended 31 December 2020										
Opening net book amount	6,015	44,471	443,501	41,130	2,399	1,753	18,215	557,484	1,602	559,086
Revaluation gain/(loss) (18(b))	-	(1,140)	(3,012)	115	30	-		(4,007)	-	(4,007)
Additions	11,311	-	-	-	10	-	5,623	16,944	151	17,095
Disposals/write downs	(65)	-	-	-	-	-	(348)	(413)	-	(413)
Transfers	(11,435)	-	7,203	3,432	-	171	629	-	-	-
Impairment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(306)	(306)
Reclassification to held for sale	-	-	-	-	-	-	(122)	(122)	(746)	(868)
Depreciation charge (5)	-	-	(9,925)	(1,562)	-	(71)	(4,151)	(15,709)	(180)	(15,889)
Closing net book amount	**5,826**	**43,331**	**437,767**	**43,115**	**2,439**	**1,853**	**19,846**	**554,177**	**521**	**554,698**
As at 31 December 2020										
Cost	5,826	-	-	-	-	2,185	55,800	63,811	538	64,349
Valuation	-	43,331	610,375	56,924	2,439	-	-	713,069	-	713,069
Accumulated depreciation	-		(172,608)	(13,809)	-	(332)	(35,954)	(222,703)	(17)	(222,720)
Net book amount	**5,826**	**43,331**	**437,767**	**43,115**	**2,439**	**1,853**	**19,846**	**554,177**	**521**	**554,698**

Plant and equipment includes all operational assets; computer equipment, motor vehicle and general plant

Accounting policy

Construction work in progress

Assets under construction recognise the extent of completion of construction work, as represented by progress payments to date. Contracts signed for the purpose of construction projects that have not been completed at year end have been disclosed as commitments for capital expenditure (refer note 23).

Land, buildings, Infrastructure and heritage and cultural assets

Independent valuers performed the following valuations at 31 December 2020:

- Desktop valuation of land, building and infrastructure assets (last comprehensive valuation was performed as at 31 December 2019)
- Comprehensive valuation of heritage and cultural assets

These assets are measured at fair value, based on periodic, but at least triennial, valuations by external independent valuers less subsequent accumulated depreciation if applicable.

Increases in the carrying amounts arising on revaluation are recognised in other comprehensive income and accumulated in equity as the property, plant and equipment revaluation reserve (refer note 18(b)). To the extent that the increase reverses a decrease previously recognised in profit or loss, the increase is first recognised in profit or loss, Decreases that reverse previous increases of the same asset class are also recognised in other comprehensive income to the extent of the remaining reserve attributable to that asset class. All other decreases are charged to the income statement.

Leasehold improvements and other property, plant and equipment

These assets are measured at historical cost, less any accumulated depreciation and impairment losses if applicable. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the items.

Right-of-use assets

Right-of-use assets are initially measured at cost, being the present value of the remaining unpaid lease payments. Subsequent measurement is at cost less any accumulated depreciation and impairment losses and adjustment for any re-measurement of the lease liability.

The University has elected to measure a class of right-of-use assets arising under concessionary (peppercorn) leases at cost in accordance with AASB 16.

Recognition thresholds

Items of property, plant and equipment with an initial cost or valuation in excess of the following thresholds are recognised for financial reporting purposes in the year of acquisition:

Land	$1
Buildings	$10,000
Construction in progress	$10,000
Plant and equipment	$5,000
Leasehold improvements	$10,000
Infrastructure	$10,000
Heritage and cultural assets	$1
Right-of-use assets	$5,000

Derecognition

An item of property, plant and equipment is derecognised upon disposal or when no future economic benefits are expected to arise from the continued use of the asset. Any gain or loss on de-recognition of the asset (calculated as the difference between the net disposable proceeds and the carrying amount of the item) is included in the income statement in the year the item is derecognised.

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	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Impairment
Property, plant and equipment are reviewed for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying amount may not be recoverable.

An impairment loss is recognised in the income statement for the amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount, unless the asset is carried at a revalued amount in accordance with another standard. The recoverable amount is the higher of an asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use.

For the purposes of assessing impairment, assets are grouped at the lowest levels for which there are separately identifiable cash flows.

The impairment testing undertaken by the University indicated impairment to one asset prior to its reclassification as held for sale. Refer note 11.

Note 14 Intangibles

Software costs			
Opening balance – 1 January		4,259	5,580
Additions		-	251
Amortisation charge	5	(1,553)	(1,572)
Closing balance – 31 December		**2,706**	**4,259**
Cost		19,095	19,095
Accumulated amortisation		(16,389)	(14,836)
Total intangibles		**2,706**	**4,259**

Accounting policy

Software costs comprise purchased software and internally developed software with a cost of $100,000 or more. Items with a lesser value are expensed in the period they are incurred.

Expenditure on development activities, relating to the design and testing of new or improved products, are recognised as intangible assets when it is probable that the project will, after considering its commercial and technical feasibility, be completed and generate future economic benefits and its costs can be measured reliably.

Capitalised expenditure comprises all directly attributable costs, including costs of materials, services, direct labour and an appropriate proportion of overheads. Expenditure on research activities related to software development are expensed in the period they are incurred.

Impairment
Intangible assets that have an indefinite useful life are not subject to amortisation and are tested annually for impairment. An impairment loss is recognised in the income statement for the amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount, unless the asset is carried at a revalued amount in accordance with another standard. The recoverable amount is the higher of an asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use.

The impairment testing undertaken by the University indicated that there were no materially impaired intangible assets during 2020.

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Note 15 Trade and other payables and contract liabilities			
(a) Trade and other payables			
Current			
OS-HELP liability to Australian Government	28(g)	343	98
Trade payables (i)		7,022	8,154
Accrued expenses and other creditors		14,742	7,351
Total current trade and other payables		**22,107**	**15,603**
Non-Current			
Trade payables (i)		2,935	-
Total non-current trade and other payables		**2,935**	**-**
(b) Contract liabilities			
Current			
Australian Government		17,617	16,797
Other		11,027	12,311
		28,644	**29,108**

(i) Trade payables include COVID-19 payroll tax relief (deferred payment dates) offered by the Queensland Government.

Contract liabilities represent unearned research grant, consultancy and contract revenue and unearned student tuition fees, where the University has not yet satisfied the performance obligation of the contract.

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Accounting policy

Trade and other payables

Trade and other payables represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the University prior to the end of the financial year, which are unpaid. The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition.

Contract liability

A contract liability is the obligation to transfer goods or services to a customer for which the University has received consideration from the customer. If a customer pays consideration before the University transfers goods or services to the customer, a contract liability is recognised when the payment is made or the payment is due (whichever is earlier). Contract liabilities are recognised as revenue as and when the performance obligations are satisfied.

Note 16 Borrowings			
Current - Unsecured			
Queensland Treasury Corporation loans		1,529	2,390
Lease liabilities		24	166
Total current borrowings		**1,553**	**2,556**
Non-current - Unsecured			
Queensland Treasury Corporation loans		3,276	4,811
Lease liabilities		509	1,451
Total non-current borrowings		**3,785**	**6,262**
Total Borrowings		**5,338**	**8,818**

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	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Accounting policy

Borrowings are initially recognised at fair value, net of transaction costs incurred. Borrowings are subsequently measured at amortised cost. Any difference between the proceeds (net of transaction costs) and the redemption amount is recognised in the income statement over the period of the borrowings using the effective interest method.

Borrowings are removed from the statement of financial position when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged, cancelled or expired. The difference between the carrying amount of the borrowing and the consideration paid is recognised as other income or other expenses.

Borrowings are classified as current liabilities unless the University has an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the end of the reporting period.

(a) Class of borrowings - Unsecured loans

Queensland Treasury Corporation loans

- 10 year, $15 million loan in June 2011 to assist the University in the purchase of land and buildings at the Springfield Campus. The interest rate on this loan is fixed at 6.22% pa.
- 10 year, $4 million, 3.03% fixed interest loan in December 2016 to assist the University to install a sustainable energy solution across the three Campuses. An additional $1.835 million was drawn in December 2018.

Lease liabilities

- Commercial land, motor vehicles and equipment.

(b) Fair value

The fair value of the QTC loans approximate their carrying values.

Note 17 Provisions

Current provisions expected to be settled within 12 months		
Employee benefits		
Long service leave	7,085	5,742
Annual leave	15,684	13,124
Total within 12 months	22,769	18,866
Current provisions expected to be settled after more than 12 months		
Employee benefits		
Long service leave	16,531	14,766
Total after more than 12 months	**16,531**	**14,766**
Total current provisions	**39,300**	**33,632**
Non–current		
Employee benefits		
Long service leave	9,924	9,298
Total non–current provisions	**9,924**	**9,298**
Total provisions	**49,224**	**42,930**

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Accounting policy

Short-term obligations (expected to be settled within 12 months)

Liabilities for wages, salaries and annual leave due but unpaid at reporting date, are recognised in the statement of financial position at the remuneration rates expected to apply at the time of settlement and include related on-costs such as payroll tax, WorkCover premiums and employer superannuation contributions.

Liabilities for non-accumulating sick leave are recognised when the leave is taken and measured at the rates paid or payable.

Other long-term obligations (expected to be settled after 12 months)

The liability for other long-term employee benefits includes long service leave, which is measured at the present value of the estimated future cash outflows to be made by the employer resulting from employees' services provided up to the reporting date. Consideration is given to future increases in wage and salary rates, including on-costs, and the University's experience with staff turnover history. Estimated future cash outflows are discounted using the rates applicable to Commonwealth Government securities at reporting date, which most closely match the terms to maturity of the related liabilities.

Regardless of the expected timing of settlements, provisions made in respect of employee benefits are classified as a current liability, unless there is an unconditional right to defer the settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the reporting date, in which case it would be classified as a non-current liability.

Note 18 Reserves

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	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
(a) Fair value reserve			
Balance – 1 January		45,472	28,856
Net gain on revaluation (i)		10,333	16,616
Balance – 31 December		55,805	45,472
(b) Property, plant and equipment revaluation reserve			
Balance – 1 January		243,965	153,965
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation (i)	13	(4,007)	90,000
Balance – 31 December		239,958	243,965
Total reserves		**295,763**	**289,437**

(i) Represents fluctuations in the fair value of assets held

Note 19 Financial risk management

Financial risk management objectives and policies

The University's financial instruments comprise cash at bank, receivables, short-term deposits held by banks, investments in equity instruments, accounts payable and borrowings.

The University's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks: market risk (including currency risk, price risk and cash flow interest rate risk), credit risk and liquidity risk. The University's overall risk management program focuses on the unpredictability of financial markets and seeks to minimise potential adverse effects on the financial performance of the University.

(a) Market risk

(i) Foreign exchange (currency) risk

Foreign exchange risk represents the potential for loss from fluctuating foreign currency rates. To mitigate this risk, where possible, the University negotiates international contracts and charges overseas student

in Australian dollars. Management does not consider the financial impact of foreign exchange risk to be material and no further disclosures are provided.

(ii) Price risk
Price risk represents the risk of a decline in value of an investment due to changes in market prices. The University holds investments in unlisted companies only (refer note 10), As these investments are not publicly traded, they are not subject to price risk.

(iii) Cash flow interest rate risk
Interest rate risk represents the effect that a fluctuating interest rate may have on the financial performance and position of the entity. The University manages its short-term cash flow risk by investing in a mixture of on-call cash funds and fixed term deposits with maturities between 90 days and 12 months and by borrowing long-term funds on a fixed rate basis.

The following tables summarise the sensitivity of the University's financial assets and financial liabilities to cash flow interest rate risk. A sensitivity of +/- 1% has been used to represent reasonably possible changes in interest rates over a 12 month period.

31 December 2020	Carrying Amount $'000			Interest Rate Risk +/- 1%	
	Total $'000	Maturity < 1 year $'000	Maturity > 1 year $'000	Result $'000	Equity $'000
Financial assets					
Cash and cash equivalents	45,555	45,555	-	321/(321)	321/(321)
Receivables	12,562	12,562	-	-	-
Term deposits	145,000	145,000	-	1,473/(1,473)	1,473/(1,473)
Unlisted shares	55,805	-	55,805	-	-
	258,922	**203,117**	**55,805**		
Financial liabilities					
Payables	25,042	25,042	-	-	-
Borrowings	5,338	1,553	3,785	-	-
	30,380	**26,595**	**3,785**		
Total inc/(dec)				**1,794/(1,794)**	**1,794/(1,794)**

31 December 2019	Carrying Amount $'000			Interest Rate Risk +/- 1%	
	Total $'000	Maturity < 1 year $'000	Maturity > 1 year $'000	Result $'000	Equity $'000
Financial assets					
Cash and cash equivalents	18,575	18,575	-	181/(181)	181/(181)
Receivables	10,798	10,798	-	-	-
Term deposits	149,503	149,503	-	1,430/(1,430)	1,430/(1,430)
Unlisted shares	45,472	-	45,472	-	-
	224,348	**178,876**	**45,472**		
Financial liabilities					
Payables	15,603	15,603	-	-	-
Borrowings	8,818	2,556	6,262	-	-
	24,421	**18,159**	**6,262**		
Total inc/(dec)				**1,611/(1,611)**	**1,611/(1,611)**

(b) Credit risk
Credit risk represents the risk that a customer may default on the payment of a debt. The maximum exposure to credit risk at balance date in relation to each class of recognised financial asset is the carrying amount of those assets as indicated in the financial statements.

The University does not have any material credit risk exposure to any single receivable or group of receivables.

(c) Liquidity risk
Liquidity risk represents the risk that an entity may have insufficient funds to meet its short term financial obligations. The University manages liquidity risk by maintaining a balance between continuity of funding, flexible deposits and accessibility to loan facilities when required. As the tables above indicate, the University maintains a significant excess in the carrying value of financial assets over financial liabilities. Management therefore do not consider liquidity to be a material risk to the financial performance or position of the University and no further disclosures are provided.

Note 20 Fair value measurements

Accounting Policy

The fair value of financial assets and financial liabilities must be estimated for recognition and measurement or for disclosure purposes. The University classifies fair value measurements using a fair value hierarchy that reflects the significance of the inputs used in making the measurements.

Fair value measurement of non-financial assets is based on the highest and best use of the asset by market participants.

(a) Fair value measurement

The carrying value, less impairment provision where applicable, for all financial assets and financial liabilities approximate their fair values.

(b) Fair value hierarchy
100 The University categorises assets and liabilities measured at fair value into a hierarchy based on the following level of inputs used in measurement:

Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities
Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices within Level 1 that are observable for the assets or liability either directly or indirectly
Level 3 – inputs for the asset or liability that are not based on observable market data (unobservable inputs).

The University measures and recognises the following assets and liabilities at fair value in the statement of financial position according to these levels on a recurring and non-recurring basis as indicated:

Fair value measurements at 31 December 2020

	Note	Total $'000	Level 1 $'000	Level 2 $'000	Level 3 $'000
Recurring fair value measurements					
Financial assets					
Equity investments at FVOCI	10	55,805	-	-	55,805
Total financial assets		**55,805**	**-**	**-**	**55,805**
Non-financial assets					
Land	13	43,331	-	-	43,331
Buildings	13	437,767	-	-	437,767
Infrastructure	13	43,115	-	-	43,115
Heritage and cultural collection	13	2,439	-	2,439	-
Total non-financial assets		**526,652**	**-**	**2,439**	**524,213**

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Fair value measurements at 31 December 2019

	Note	Total $'000	Level 1 $'000	Level 2 $'000	Level 3 $'000
Recurring fair value measurements					
Financial assets					
Equity investments at FVOCI	10	45,472	-	-	45,472
Total financial assets		**45,472**	**-**	**-**	**45,472**
Non-financial assets					
Land	13	44,471	-	-	44,471
Buildings	13	443,501	-	-	443,501
Infrastructure	13	41,130	-	-	41,130
Heritage and cultural collection	13	2,399	-	2,399	-
Total non-financial assets		**531,501**	**-**	**2,399**	**529,102**

(c) Valuation techniques used to derive level 2 and 3 fair values

Recurring fair value measurements

Equity investments at FVOCI (level 3) – shares in an unlisted public company have been valued on a combined methodology approach, using quoted prices adjusted for non-observable inputs for listed investments combined with a cost approach for other assets and liabilities of the company. Shares in an unlisted private not-for-profit company have been valued using an assets based methodology.

Land (level 3) – initially assessed using a market approach (direct comparison) and then applying a discount to the rate per square metre to acknowledge the specialised nature and use of University land.

Buildings and infrastructure (level 3) – a market approach is not available given the limited comparable sales of these specialised use assets. Valuations were therefore undertaken using a current replacement cost approach. This approach estimates the replacement cost of the asset utilising market data and cost guides available on current construction costs and depreciates those costs, based on condition and age factors, to arrive at the fair value. This approach incorporates componentisation and residual values where appropriate.

Heritage and cultural collection (art collection) (level 2) – valuation is based on using inputs other than quoted prices that are observable for the artwork, including auction records, consultation with art dealers and private sale information. Comparisons are then made with current market prices for similar assets and adjustments made accordingly.

(d) Fair value measurements using significant unobservable inputs (level 3)

The following table summarises the quantitative information about the significant unobservable inputs used in the level 3 fair value measurements:

Description	Fair value 31.12.20 $'000	Unobservable inputs	Range of inputs (probability weighted average)	Relationship of unobservable inputs to fair value
Shares in Education Australia Limited	50,092	Discount rate applied to value of shares held in listed entity, IDP Australia Limited, to reflect liquidity issues and restrictive shareholder agreement.	+5%/-5%	$0.4M/($0.4M)

Note 21 Key management personnel disclosures

(a) Names of responsible persons and executive officers

The following persons, holding positions that had authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the University, were the key management personnel of the University during the financial year:

Council Member	Position	Appointed/(Ceased)
Mr John Dornbusch	Chancellor	
Professor Geraldine Mackenzie[1]	Vice-Chancellor	
Professor Grant Daggard[1]	Chair, Academic Board	
Professor Pauline Collins[1]	Academic Staff Member	
Mrs Mary McGilvray[1]	Non-Academic Staff Member	(18.12.2020)
Ms Lauren Walsburg	Student Member	(30.03.2020)
Mr Grant Vickery	Student Member	29.05.2020
Ms Heidi Dugan	Graduate of the University	
Ms Rachel Barlow	Governor-in-Council Member	
Mr Chris Bazley	Governor-in-Council Member	
Dr A Carol Cox AM	Governor-in-Council Member	
Mr Brett Delaney	Governor-in-Council Member	
Assistant Commissioner Charysse Pond APM	Governor-in-Council Member	
Mr George Fox AM	Additional Member and Deputy Chancellor	

[1] Council members who were also University employees.

Executive Officers	Position	Appointed/(Ceased) [2]
Professor Geraldine Mackenzie	Vice-Chancellor	
Professor John Bell	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	
Mr Athol Kerridge	Chief Financial Officer	
Mr Michael Thomas	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise Services)	
Professor Karen Nelson	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	
Professor Barbara de la Harpe	Executive Dean, Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts	
Professor Glen Coleman	Executive Dean, Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences	
Professor Helen Partridge	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)	(07.02.2020)
Mrs Helen Nolan	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Services)	(01.03.2020)
Mr Josua Pienaar	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)	02.03.2020
Mr Ren Yi	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)	
Mr John Cole OAM	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)	

[2] The appointed/(ceased) dates reflect the commencement/cessation in the KMP role and may not necessarily reflect employment service dates with the University.

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Further information in relation to the Council and the Executive appears in the body of the Annual Report under the section relating to Governance and Senior Executive.

(b) Remuneration of Council Members and Executives

Council members who were not University employees received remuneration in accordance with the approved Council Remuneration Policy and associated Council Remuneration Schedule. Council members who were also University employees received only their substantive role remuneration while attending to Council business. Council members who were also public service employees of other entities received remuneration by their employing entity in accordance with arrangements with that entity. The University accepts financial responsibility for travel costs related to Council meetings and Council activities.

The Remuneration Sub-Committee of the University Council sets executive remuneration policy of the University's key executive management personnel appointed by Council. The remuneration and other terms of employment for the key executive management personnel are specified in employment contracts.

The remuneration of Council members and Executives appear in the tables below.

	2020	2019
Remuneration of Council Members (excl. Vice-Chancellor)		
$ Nil - $ 14,999	2	3
$ 30,000 - $ 44,999	4	2
$ 45,000 - $ 54,999	-	2
$ 60,000 - $ 74,999	2	2
$ 90,000 - $104,999	1	1
$105,000 - $119,999	1	1
	10	**11**

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	2020	2019
Remuneration of Executives (incl. Vice-Chancellor)		
$15,000 - $29,999	1	-
$45,000 - $59,999	1	-
$120,000 - $134,999	-	1
$135,000 - $149,999	-	1
$150,000 - $164,999	-	1
$300,000 - $314,999	-	3
$315,000 - $329,999	-	1
$330,000 - $344,999	-	1
$345,000 - $359,999	2	-
$360,000 - $374,999	1	-
$375,000 - $389,999	1	4
$390,000 - $404,999	1	-
$420,000 - $434,999	2	-
$435,000 - $449,999	2	-
$675,000 - $689,999	-	1
$705,000 - $719,999	1	-
	12	**13**

	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

(c) Key management personnel compensation

Short-term employee benefits	3,635	3,675
Post-employment benefits	542	543
Other long term benefits	167	-
Termination benefits	-	-
Total	**4,344**	**4,218**

Remuneration packages for key executive management personnel comprise the following:

- Short-term employee benefits which include:
    - Monetary benefits - salaries, allowances and leave entitlements paid during the entire year or for that part of the year during which the employee occupied the specified position
    - Non-monetary benefits - provision of motor vehicle and other non-cash benefits together with fringe benefits tax applicable to each benefit
- Long-term employee benefits include long service leave paid
- Post-employment benefits include employer superannuation contributions
- Redundancy payments are provided for within individual contracts of employment. Contracts of employment may also provide for notice periods or payment in lieu of notice on termination, regardless of the reason for termination
- Performance bonuses are not paid to Executive Officers at the University

(d) Loans to key management personnel

No loans were made, guaranteed or secured, directly or indirectly by the University to any key management personnel during the year.

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(e) Other transactions with key management personnel

There were no other transactions with key management personnel during the year.

Note 22 Remuneration of auditors

During the year, the following fees were paid for services provided by the auditor of the University:

Audit of financial statements		
Fees paid to Queensland Audit Office	203	193
Total paid for audit and review	**203**	**193**

Note 23 Commitments for Expenditure

Capital expenditure commitments
Capital expenditure contracted for at the reporting date but not recognised as liabilities, payable as follows:

Property, plant and equipment		
– within one year	11,755	7,727
Total property, plant and equipment expenditure commitments	**11,755**	**7,727**

Property, plant and equipment commitments include $7.6M in building upgrade works (2019: $4.6M).

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

	2020 $'000	2019 $'000

Note 24 Related parties

(a) Key management personnel

Disclosures relating to Council members and executive officers are set out in note 21.

(b) Transactions with related parties

The following transactions occurred during the year with the QCWT (refer note 1(e)):

Sale of goods and services	12	25
Purchase of goods and services	1	28
Joint Venture capital contribution	375	250

Note 25 Monies held in trust

The University administers a bank account (AusAID) to facilitate the distribution of grants to students from third world countries. As the University performs a custodial role in respect of transactions and balances, they are not recognised in the financial statements.

Note 26 Reconciliation of net result to net cash provided by operating activities

Net result for the period	12,580	5,580
Depreciation and amortisation	17,442	21,795
Net (gain)/loss on sale of non–current assets	(30)	(34)
Asset Impairment	306	-
Change in assets and liabilities		
(Increase) / decrease in receivables	(1,764)	(1,744)
(Increase) / decrease in inventories	133	136
(Increase) / decrease in other non-financial assets	(895)	3,462
Increase / (decrease) in trade and other payables	12,503	(10,086)
Increase / (decrease) in provisions	6,294	1,372
Increase / (decrease) in other liabilities	(3,961)	9,004
Net cash provided by operating activities	**42,608**	**29,485**

Note 27 Events occurring after the end of the reporting period

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be on-going. Fortunately, the financial effect on the University in 2020 was minimised due to significant relief packages provided by both the Commonwealth and State Governments. Although it is not practical to estimate the continuing impact of COVID-19 after the reporting date, management are confident the financial position of the University will remain strong.

The Job-ready Graduates Package commenced 1 January 2021. This package includes significant changes to the Commonwealth Grants Scheme. Due to the inclusion of a Transition Fund in this package, the impact on University revenues in 2021 is estimated to be minimal.

Except for the above, no other matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the reporting period which could significantly affect the operations or financial position of the University.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

Note 28 Acquittal of Australian Government financial assistance

Note 28(a) EDUCATION – CGS and Other EDUCATION Grants

	Note	Commonwealth Grant Scheme #1		Access and Participation Fund		Indigenous Student Success Program #2		Disability Performance Funding #3	
		2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019
		$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Financial Assistance received in CASH during the reporting period (total cash received from the Australian Government for the Programs)		139,221	130,305	4,871	5,042	1,926	2,017	99	98
Net accrual adjustments		(819)	432	-	-	-	(23)	-	-
Revenue for the period	2.1(a)	138,402	130,737	4,871	5,042	1,926	1,994	99	98
Surplus/(deficit) from the previous year		-	-	-	-	-	-	24	26
Total revenue including accrued revenue		138,402	130,737	4,871	5,042	1,926	1,994	123	124
Less expenses including accrued expenses		(138,402)	(130,737)	(4,871)	(5,042)	(1,926)	(1,994)	(123)	(100)
Surplus/(deficit) for reporting period		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24

		Promotion of Excellence in Learning & Teaching		Total	
		2020	2019	2020	2019
		$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Financial Assistance received in CASH during the reporting period (total cash received from the Australian Government for the Programs)		-	-	**146,117**	**137,462**
Net accrual adjustments		-	-	**(819)**	**409**
Revenue for the period	2.1(a)	-	-	**145,298**	**137,871**
Surplus/(deficit) from the previous year		16	36	**40**	**62**
Total revenue including accrued revenue		16	36	**145,338**	**137,933**
Less expenses including accrued expenses		(16)	(20)	**(145,338)**	**(137,893)**
Surplus/(deficit) for reporting period		-	16	**-**	**40**

#1 Includes the basic CGS grant amount, Regional Loading, Enabling Loading, Allocated Places and Non Designated Courses
#2 Replaced Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships Program and Indigenous Support Program as of 1 January 2018
#3 Includes Additional Support for Students with Disabilities

Note 28(b) Higher Education Loan Programs (excluding OS-HELP)

	Note	HECS-HELP (Australian Government payments only) 2020 $'000	HECS-HELP (Australian Government payments only) 2019 $'000	FEE-HELP 2020 $'000	FEE-HELP 2019 $'000	SA-HELP 2020 $'000	SA-HELP 2019 $'000	Total 2020 $'000	Total 2019 $'000
Cash payable/(receivable) at beginning of year		1,758	4,731	(181)	81	(21)	32	**1,556**	**4,844**
Financial assistance received in cash during the reporting period		71,870	66,883	12,647	10,227	2,576	2,382	**87,093**	**79,492**
Cash available for the period		73,628	71,614	12,466	10,308	2,555	2,414	**88,649**	**84,336**
Revenue and income earned	2.1(b)	72,796	69,856	11,485	10,489	2,540	2,435	**86,821**	**82,780**
Cash payable/(receivable) at end of year		832	1,758	981	(181)	15	(21)	**1,828**	**1,556**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

Note 28(c) Department of Education, Skills and Employment – Research Programs #4

	Note	Research Training Program 2020 $'000	Research Training Program 2019 $'000	Research Support Program 2020 $'000	Research Support Program 2019 $'000	Total 2020 $'000	Total 2019 $'000
Financial Assistance received in CASH during the reporting period (total cash received from the Australian Government for the Programs)		5,569	5,310	3,705	3,307	**9,274**	**8,617**
Net accrual adjustments		-	-	-	-	**-**	**-**
Revenue for the period	2.1(c)	5,569	5,310	3,705	3,307	**9,274**	**8,617**
Surplus/(deficit) from the previous year		-	-	-	-	**-**	**-**
Total revenue including accrued revenue		5,569	5,310	3,705	3,307	**9,274**	**8,617**
Less expenses including accrued expenses		(5,569)	(5,310)	(3,705)	(3,307)	**(9,274)**	**(8,617)**
Surplus/(deficit) for reporting period		-	-	-	-	**-**	**-**

#4 Any reported surpluses for 2020 will be rolled over for future use by the University

Note 28(d) Total Higher Education Provider Research Training Program expenditure

	Total Domestic Students 2020 $'000	Total Domestic Students 2019 $'000	Total Overseas Students 2020 $'000	Total Overseas Students 2019 $'000
Research Training Program Fees offsets	3,507	3,257	111	144
Research Training Program Stipends	1,752	1,651	199	258
Research Training Program Allowances	-	-	-	-
Total Support	**5,259**	**4,908**	**310**	**402**

Note 28(e) Other Capital Funding

	Note	Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities Grant		Total	
		2020	2019	2020	2019
		$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Financial Assistance received in CASH during the reporting period (total cash received from the Australian Government for the Programs)		-	199	**-**	**199**
Net accrual adjustments		16	(16)	**16**	**(16)**
Revenue for the period	2.1(d)	16	183	**16**	**183**
Surplus/(deficit) from the previous year		40	-	40	**-**
Total revenue including accrued revenue		56	183	**56**	**183**
Less expenses including accrued expenses		(16)	(143)	**(16)**	**(143)**
Surplus/(deficit) for reporting period		40	40	**40**	**40**

Note 28(f) Australian Research Council Grants

		Discovery Projects		Linkage Projects		Total	
		2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019
		$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Financial Assistance received in CASH during the reporting period (total cash received from the Australian Government for the Programs)		1,443	974	(45)	30	**1,398**	**1,004**
Net accrual adjustments		(620)	(354)	158	37	**(462)**	**(317)**
Revenue for the period	2.1(e)	823	620	113	67	**936**	**687**
Surplus/(deficit) from the previous year		409	307	209	179	**618**	**486**
Total revenue including accrued revenue		1,232	927	322	246	**1,554**	**1,173**
Less expenses including accrued expenses		(604)	(518)	(3)	(37)	**(607)**	**(555)**
Surplus/(deficit) for reporting period		628	409	319	209	**947**	**618**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 December 2020

Note 28(g) OS – HELP

	Note	2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Cash received during the reporting period		253	144
Cash spent during the reporting period		(8)	(78)
Net Cash Received		245	66
Cash surplus/(deficit) from the previous year		98	32
Cash surplus/(deficit) for the reporting period	15(a)	343	98

Note 28(h) Student Services and Amenities Fee

		2020 $'000	2019 $'000
Unspent/(overspent) revenue from previous period		1,464	1,618
SA-HELP revenue earned	2.1(b)	2,540	2,435
Student services fees direct from students	2.3	1,063	988
Total revenue expendable in period		5,067	5,041
Student services expenses during period		(3,365)	(3,577)
Unspent/(overspent) student services revenue		1,702	1,464

University of Southern Queensland
Management Certificate

We have prepared the annual financial statements pursuant to the provisions of the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and other prescribed requirements and we certify that:

(a) the financial statements are in agreement with the accounts and records of the University of Southern Queensland; and

(b) in our opinion –

(i) the prescribed requirements for establishing and keeping the accounts have been complied with in all material respects;

(ii) the financial statements have been drawn up to present a true and fair view of the transactions of the University of Southern Queensland for the period of 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020 and of the financial position as at 31 December 2020 in accordance with prescribed accounting standards and conform with the Guidelines for Australian Higher Education Providers issued by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment;

(iii) the amount of Australian Government financial assistance expended during the reporting period was for the purposes for which it was intended and the University of Southern Queensland has complied with applicable legislation, contracts, agreements and program guidelines in making expenditure;

(iv) the University of Southern Queensland charged Student Services and Amenities Fees strictly in accordance with the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the Administration Guidelines made under the Act. Revenue from the fee was spent strictly in accordance with the Act and only on services and amenities specified in subsection 19-38(4) of the Act;

(v) at the time of this Certificate there are reasonable grounds to believe that the University will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due; and

(vi) the financial statements and notes satisfy the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

J DORNBUSCH Chancellor	**G MACKENZIE** Vice–Chancellor	**A KERRIDGE** Chief Financial Officer
Date – 22nd February 2021	Date – 22nd February 2021	Date – 22nd February 2021

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Council of the University of Southern Queensland

Report on the audit of the financial report

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying financial report of the University of Southern Queensland.

In my opinion, the financial report:

a) gives a true and fair view of the entity's financial position as at 31 December 2020, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended

b) complies with the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*, the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013 and Australian Accounting Standards.

The financial report comprises the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2020, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes to the financial statements including summaries of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the management certificate given by the the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer.

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Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*, which incorporate the Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of my report.

I am independent of the entity in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Australia. I have also fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code and the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Key audit matters

Key audit matters are those matters that, in my professional judgement, were of most significance in my audit of the financial report of the current period. I addressed these matters in the context of my audit of the financial report as a whole, and in forming my opinion thereon, and I do not provide a separate opinion on these matters.

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Valuation of Specialised Buildings ($437.8 million)

Refer to Note 13 the financial statements.

Key audit matter	How my audit addressed the key audit matter
Specialised buildings were material to the University of Southern Queensland at balance date and were measured using the current replacement cost method that comprises: • gross replacement cost, less • accumulated depreciation. The University performs comprehensive revaluation of all its buildings every three years, or whenever a material variation is expected to have occurred, with desktop valuations conducted in the intervening period. In making these judgements, the University engaged an external valuation expert to perform a comprehensive valuation in 2019. Indexation has been applied for the 2020 balances. The University derived the gross replacement cost of its buildings at balance date through using unit prices that required significant judgements for: • identifying the components of buildings with separately identifiable replacement costs • developing a unit rate for each of these components, including: – estimating the current cost for a modern substitute (including locality factors and on-costs), expressed as a rate per unit (e.g., $/square metre) – identifying whether the existing building contains obsolescence or less utility compared to the modern substitute, and if so, estimating the adjustment to the unit rate required to reflect this difference. The measurement of accumulated depreciation involved significant judgements for forecasting the remaining useful lives of building components. The significant judgements required for gross replacement cost and useful lives are also significant for calculating annual depreciation expense.	My audit procedures included, but were not limited to: In a previous year when a comprehensive valuation was conducted: • Assessing the competence, capability and objectivity of the valuation specialist. • Assessing the adequacy of management's review of the valuation process. • Obtaining an understanding of the methodology used and assessing the design, integrity and appropriateness using common industry practices. • On a sample basis, evaluating the relevance, completeness, and accuracy of source data used to derive unit rates for the: – Modern substitute – Adjustment for excess quality or obsolescence. In the current year when indexation was applied: • Evaluating the reasonableness of the indices used against other publicly available information about movements in values for replacement costs of similar assets. • Assessing the ongoing reasonableness of the asset useful lives by: – Reviewing management's annual assessment of useful lives; – Assessing the appropriateness of useful lives where assets were disposed of prior to the end of their useful lives; and – Reviewing assets with an inconsistent relationship between condition and remaining life. • Performing reasonableness tests to confirm depreciation is calculated in accordance with the University's accounting policies and industry standards.

Other information

Other information comprises the information included in University of Southern Queensland's annual report for the year ended 31 December 2020, but does not include the financial report and my auditor's report thereon.

The Council is responsible for the other information.

My opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial report, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the entity for the financial report

The Council responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*, the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013 and Australian Accounting Standards, and for such internal control as the Council determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Council is also responsible for assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless it is intended to abolish the entity or to otherwise cease operations.

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Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances. This is not done for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal controls, but allows me to express an opinion on compliance with prescribed requirements.

Queensland Audit Office
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- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the entity.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the entity's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. I base my conclusions on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Council regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

From the matters communicated with the Council, I determine those matters that were of most significance in the audit of the financial report of the current period and are therefore the key audit matters. I describe these matters in my auditor's report unless law or regulation precludes public disclosure about the matter or when, in extremely rare circumstances, I determine that a matter should not be communicated in my report because the adverse consequences of doing so would reasonably be expected to outweigh the public interest benefits of such communication.

Statement

In accordance with s.40 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, for the year ended 31 December 2020:

a) I received all the information and explanations I required.

b) I consider that, the prescribed requirements in relation to the establishment and keeping of accounts were complied with in all material respects.

Prescribed requirements scope

The prescribed requirements for the establishment and keeping of accounts are contained in the *Financial Accountability Act 2009*, any other Act and the Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019. The applicable requirements include those for keeping financial records that correctly record and explain the entity's transactions and account balances to enable the preparation of a true and fair financial report.

M REARDON
as delegate of the Auditor-General

Queensland Audit Office
Brisbane

Annual Report Compliance Checklist

Summary of requirement		Basis for requirement	Annual report reference
Letter of compliance	• A letter of compliance from the accountable officer or statutory body to the relevant Minister/s	ARRs – section 7	Page 1
Accessibility	• Table of contents • Glossary	ARRs – section 9.1	Page 2 Page 3
	• Public availability	ARRs – section 9.2	Inside front cover
	• Interpreter service statement	*Queensland Government Language Services Policy* ARRs – section 9.3	Inside front cover
	• Copyright notice	*Copyright Act 1968* ARRs – section 9.4	Inside front cover
	• Information Licensing	*QGEA – Information Licensing* ARRs – section 9.5	Inside front cover
General information	• Introductory Information	ARRs – section 10.1	Page 3
	• Machinery of Government changes	ARRs – section 10.2, 31 and 32	(if applicable) n/a
	• Agency role and main functions	ARRs – section 10.2	Page 6
	• Operating environment	ARRs – section 10.3	Page 7
Non-financial performance	• Government's objectives for the community	ARRs – section 11.1	Pages 23–24
	• Other whole-of-government plans/specific initiatives	ARRs – section 11.2	n/a
	• Agency objectives and performance indicators	ARRs – section 11.3	Pages 7, 26–65
	• Agency service areas and service standards	ARRs – section 11.4	Pages 26–65
Financial performance	• Summary of financial performance	ARRs – section 12.1	Page 68
Governance – management and structure	• Organisational structure	ARRs – section 13.1	Pages 8–9
	• Executive management	ARRs – section 13.2	Pages 10–14
	• Government bodies (statutory bodies and other entities)	ARRs – section 13.3	Pages 15–17
	• Public Sector Ethics	*Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* ARRs – section 13.4	Page 22
	• Human Rights	*Human Rights Act 2019* ARRs – section 13.5	Page 22
	• Queensland public service values	ARRs – section 13.6	n/a
Governance – risk management and accountability	• Risk management	ARRs – section 14.1	Page 20
	• Audit committee	ARRs – section 14.2	Pages 20–21
	• Internal audit	ARRs – section 14.3	Page 21
	• External scrutiny	ARRs – section 14.4	Page 21
	• Information systems and recordkeeping	ARRs – section 14.5	Page 21

Governance – human resources	• Strategic workforce planning and performance	ARRs – section 15.1	Pages 53–55
	• Early retirement, redundancy and retrenchment	Directive No.04/18 *Early Retirement, Redundancy and Retrenchment* ARRs – section 15.2	Pages 56–58
Open Data	• Statement advising publication of information	ARRs – section 16	Inside front cover
	• Consultancies	ARRs – section 33.1	https://data.qld.gov.au
	• Overseas travel	ARRs – section 33.2	https://data.qld.gov.au
	• Queensland Language Services Policy	ARRs – section 33.3	https://data.qld.gov.au
Financial statements	• Certification of financial statements	FAA – section 62 FPMS – sections 38, 39 and 46 ARRs – section 17.1	Page 111
	• Independent Auditor's Report	FAA – section 62 FPMS – section 46 ARRs – section 17.2	Pages 112–115

FAA *Financial Accountability Act 2009*

FPMS *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*

ARRs *Annual report requirements for Queensland Government agencies*

USQ at a Glance

Senior Executive

Vice-Chancellor
Professor Geraldine Mackenzie

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Professor Karen Nelson

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Professor John Bell

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise Services)
Michael Thomas

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)
Professor John Cole

Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)
Professor Ren Yi

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Professor Josh Pienaar (from 2 March 2020)

Executive Dean (Business, Education, Law and Arts)
Professor Barbara de la Harpe

Executive Dean (Health, Engineering and Sciences)
Professor Glen Coleman

Chief Financial Officer
Athol Kerridge

Statistics

STAFF	2019	2020
Academic	794	793
Professional	974	945
FINANCIALS*		
Total Revenue ($'000)	327,359	344,972
Total Assets ($'000)	800,308	830,570
Total Equity ($'000)	702,794	721,700
STUDENT NUMBERS		
Female	14,498	14,814
Male	11,141	10,792
Indeterminate/Unspecified	31	42
STUDENT CATEGORIES		
Domestic (headcount)	22,873	23,200
International (headcount)	2797	2448
Undergraduate (load)	11,152	11,287
Postgraduate (load)	2502	2681

*Draft unaudited financial statements

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The University of Southern Queensland acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways where the University is located. Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

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