



## **Fieldwork Pack**

**Innovative perspectives and approaches for  
enhancing the student experience**

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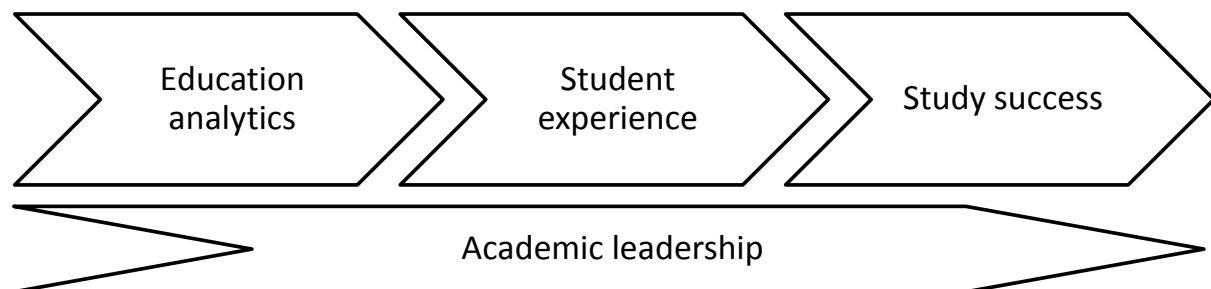
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## **Fieldwork Overview**

### **Summary**

The fieldwork component of the project involves empirical work with students and institutional representations. This document provides an overview of instrumentation and the methods planned for data collection.

Figure 1 shows the study's broad design. In essence, education analytics underpin a better understanding of students and their experience, which in turn spurs student success. Each of these areas, and particularly their intersection, are joined by distributed academic leadership.



**Figure 1: Study design**

Two instruments—a student interview schedule and an institutional inventory—have been developed from the study design to yield information about the nature of student success, the identity and experiences of today's students, the nature and use of information available to institutions, and what can be done to improve. Both instruments are open-ended and qualitative given the nature of the phenomenon under study and maturity of the research and practice field.

### **Institutional scan**

#### *Sample*

All Australian Universities (40) and Universities of Specialisation (1) will be invited to participate in the inventory. Additionally, a further sample of higher education institutions (94) have been chosen on the following basis: the number of student enrolments in excess of 1000; TAFE's; and institutions part of a broader corporate, social or educational enterprise.

#### *Materials*

Materials consist of:

- Invitation letter to VC/CEO;
- Institution Nomination Form;
- Follow-up invitation letter to VC/CEO;
- Email to nominated person(s);
- Participation Pack;
- Project Overview; and
- Institution Inventory.

The Institution Inventory provides the main means of collecting data from higher education institutions. This Institution Inventory asks institutions to assess the validity of the student success model, to provide information relating to understanding students, to give an overview of available student data sources, and to discuss current levels of data driven decision-making. The Institution Inventory provided in this pack has been drafted to support a series of intensive consultations between institutions and the project team. These consultations will seek to establish (likely highly diverse) current practice, current developments, and opportunity for improvement.

### *Method*

A letter of invitation and nomination will be sent to all Vice-Chancellors and CEOs via email, asking them to participate by nominating an appropriate person or team within the institution to complete the Institution Inventory. A follow-up letter has been prepared in the event that no response is received. When participation has been confirmed, an email and participation pack will be sent to the nominated person or team. Institutions will be given time to review the materials and source background information, following which a call may be scheduled to help work through the questions and support the response. Institutions will then be given time to finalise completion of the form, and return it to the project team

### **Student interviews**

#### *Sample*

Institution and student populations will be stratified using demographic and contextual factors identified as important in previous student experience research. From these populations we will identify around ten institutions from which to sample in total between 30 to 50 students. As per the ethics protocol, potential participants will be emailed an outline of the research and a plain language statement and an interview requested. The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes with permission from the participants.

#### *Materials*

Fieldwork materials consist of:

- Plain Language Statement;
- Consent Form; and
- Student Interview Questions.

#### *Method*

Interviews will be conducted with students to elicit information on who students are and what they expect from higher education, how students present information on themselves, and what can be done to form conceptually and empirically integrated perspectives. Interviews will be semi-structured and face-to-face. Interview questions have been developed based on the background research in Phase 1 of the project. Interview questions will be used as guidance, asking in an unbiased, friendly and non-threatening manner to allow participants to provide fresh commentary about the topic.

## Schedule

Activity	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN
Validate instrumentation								
Prepare for fieldwork								
Invitations to VC/CEO								
Institution scan								
Student interviews								
Data compilation								
Analysis								

### **Student interview materials**

The following pages show these materials:

- Plain Language Statement
- Consent Form
- Student Interview Questions

## **Plain Language Statement**

### **Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience**



You are invited to participate in the above research project. The project is funded by the Office for Learning and Teaching and is a collaboration between the University of Melbourne, Indiana University, Janet Clarke Hall, Macquarie University, Navitas, University of Austin, Texas, University of Queensland, and University of Western Australia.

The aim of the project is to build new concepts for understanding the undergraduate student experience in Australian higher education. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to contribute to this study by participating in a 45-60 minute interview. The aim is to get a detailed picture of your higher education student experience. With your permission, the interview would be tape-recorded to ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say.

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. We will remove any references to contextual and personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity.

Once the report arising from this project has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application to the investigators, or from the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. It is also possible that the results will be published in journal articles and presented at academic conferences. The data will be kept securely for five years from the date of reporting, before being destroyed.

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice.

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the attached consent form and returning it. The investigators will contact you to arrange mutually convenient times for the interview.

Should you require further information, or have any concerns about the project, please do not hesitate to contact the Project Director, Professor Hamish Coates at 03 9035 4928. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 03 8344 2073, or fax: 03 9347 6739.

## Consent Form

### Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience

Project reference: 1543674.1



Name of participant:	
Name of school / institution:	
Name of investigators:	Hamish Coates, Marian Mahat, Linda Corrin, Jason Lodge, Paula Kelly, Ryan Naylor, Vic Borden, Phil Long, Sid Nair, Damian Powell, David Wilkinson and Helen Zimmerman

1. I consent to participate in this project. The details of the project have been explained to me, and I have been given a written Plain Language Statement to keep.
2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form, it will be retained by the investigator(s).
3. I understand that my participation will involve a personal semi-structured interview and I agree that the investigator(s) may use the results as described in the Plain Language Statement.
4. I acknowledge that:
  - a. The possible effects of participating in an interview have been explained to my satisfaction;
  - b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
  - c. The project is for the purpose of research;
  - d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements<sup>1</sup>; I have also been informed that as the number of institutions and people involved is quite small, it is possible that someone may identify me.
  - e. I have been informed that with my consent the interview will be audio-taped and I understand that the audio-tapes and the interview data will be stored securely and will be destroyed after five years;
  - f. My name will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the project;
  - g. I have been informed that a copy of the summary of project findings will be forwarded to me, should I wish to receive this.

I consent to the interview being audio-taped:	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no (please tick)
I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on the study findings:	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no (please tick)
Participant signature:	Date:	

<sup>1</sup> It is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions.



## Student Interview Questions

### Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience



<b>Background</b>
Socio-demographics: Sex, age, institution, qualification, discipline/major, year level, mode/type of study, citizenship, languages spoken, parents highest education completed, home postcode, living arrangements, regionality
<b>Student success: General</b>
In what ways do you describe 'student success'?
How do you think your institution defines student success? The same way as you?
<b>Student success: Admission</b>
What were the main things that attracted you to further your studies at this institution? Are these reasons still important to you?
<b>Student success: Engagement</b>
Are you achieving what is expected by your institution? Are you achieving what you had hoped in your studies?
What are the most rewarding aspects of your current study (e.g. quality of teachers, support staff, campus life, positive academic results, clubs, socialising, learning new things, flexibility)?
<b>Student success: Completion</b>
What outcomes really count in your study for you personally (e.g. results, finishing on time, having broader experiences, completing your course, employment)?
Do you feel you are getting value from your higher education experience?
<b>Student success: Post-graduation</b>
Do you know what you are going to do after you complete your current studies?
What do you see as the lifetime advantage of your higher education? Will it make you better off compared with not studying?
<b>Identity</b>
Thinking very generally, how would you <u>describe yourself as a person</u> (e.g. personality, friendships, family, age, gender, cultural background, family environment, postcode, living arrangement, from the country, online profile, job, clubs, friends, high school, friendship group)?
Now thinking more specifically, how would you <u>describe yourself as a student</u> ?
<b>Data use and collection</b>
What technologies, platforms and networks do you use <u>as a student</u> (Facebook, Twitter, LMS (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle), portal)?
Do you know what types of information your institution collects about you?
Do you know in what ways your institution uses information about you?
<b>Institutional change</b>
What could your institution do better to <u>help you succeed</u> ? How could the institution better understand your perspective?
What should your institution know about you to make your study more successful? How could the institution better understand your perspectives?
What additional feedback could your institution provide to better help you succeed? Please think in terms of formal learning as well as broader experiences.

### **Institution scan materials**

The following pages show these materials:

- Invitation letter to VC/CEO;
- Institution Nomination Form;
- Follow-up invitation letter to VC/CEO;
- Email to nominated person(s);
- Participation Pack;
- Project Overview; and
- Institution Inventory.

## Invitation letter to VC/CEO

VC/CEO NAME  
INSTITUTION NAME  
DATED



Dear VC/CEO NAME

### Re: Invitation to participate in national study of the student experience

In February 2015 a team of researchers across Australia and the United States started a project funded by the Australian Government titled 'Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience'. The project is funded by the Office for Learning and Teaching, and is a collaboration between the University of Melbourne, Indiana University, Janet Clarke Hall, Macquarie University, Navitas, University of Austin, Texas, University of Queensland and University of Western Australia. More information about the project can be found here: [www.olt.gov.au/project-innovative-perspectives-and-approaches-enhancing-student-experience-2014](http://www.olt.gov.au/project-innovative-perspectives-and-approaches-enhancing-student-experience-2014).

This study aims to bring about sustainable strategic change through improving institutional capacity to enhance the 21st century student experience by:

- building new concepts for understanding Australia's higher education students;
- identifying new data sources and approaches for measuring the student experience; and
- engaging institutions in enhancement work and new conversations about students.

We are seeking important information from Australian universities and higher education institutions that will be used to realise the project's objectives, namely, to develop new approaches to enhance and support the undergraduate student experience.

To assist with the fieldwork phase of this project we have developed an institutional inventory which contains questions regarding the student experience, student success, relevant institutional data sources, and the use of data to inform decision-making. We are also conducting a small sample of student interviews.

Participation in the fieldwork institutional inventory will contribute significantly to project outcomes. The information will help understand how institutions can better understand contemporary students and facilitate each student's success. When the project is completed, each participating institution will be sent an Institutional Benchmark Report. Broader findings and results will be published in a National Report.

With your assistance we are seeking to identify the most appropriate person/s within your institution who will be able to provide institutional information relevant to the project. I would be grateful if you could nominate the best person/s to assist by **returning the nomination form by INSERT DATE to [marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au)**.

We intend to protect the anonymity of your institution and the confidentiality of individuals' responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. No findings, which could identify any individual participant and/or institution, will be included in the final report and in any publications arising from the research. Confidentiality will be strictly observed. All data collected can only be accessed by project team members, which will be stored for 5 years before being destroyed, as prescribed by University's regulations. Please be advised that your institution's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice.

Should you require further information, or if you have any concerns about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me (as below), or the Project Manager Ms Marian Mahat at 03 9035 5630 or via email [marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au). Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 03 8344 2073, or fax: 03 9347 6739.

Yours sincerely

SIGNED

**Professor Hamish Coates**

Attached

- Institution Nomination Form
- Project Overview

**Institution Nomination Form****Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience****Institution details**

Institution / campus name	
Institution / campus location	

**Person with overall responsibility**

Contact name	
Position	
Email	
Telephone	

**Person to complete the inventory**

Contact name	
Position	
Email	
Telephone	

**Additional or alternative nomination**

Contact name	
Position	
Email	
Telephone	

Please return completed nomination form to [marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au) by **Thursday 2 July 2015**.

## Follow-up invitation letter to VC/CEO

VC/CEO NAME  
INSTITUTION NAME  
DATED



Dear VC/CEO NAME

### Re: Follow-up invitation to participate in national study of the student experience

By way of follow-up, I am sending this letter to extend an invitation to participate in a project funded by the Australian Government titled 'Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience'. The project is funded by the Office for Learning and Teaching, and is a collaboration between the University of Melbourne, Indiana University, Janet Clarke Hall, Macquarie University, Navitas, University of Austin, Texas, University of Queensland and University of Western Australia. More information about the project can be found here: <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-innovative-perspectives-and-approaches-enhancing-student-experience-2014>

This study aims to bring about sustainable strategic change through improving institutional capacity to enhance the 21st century student experience by:

- building new concepts for understanding Australia's higher education students;
- identifying new data sources and approaches for measuring the student experience; and
- engaging institutions in enhancement work and new conversations about students.

The project team has confirmed a sample of participating Australian higher education institutions and fieldwork will commence shortly. I would be most appreciative if you were able to confirm participation of your institution by **Thursday 16 July 2015**.

Participation in the fieldwork institutional inventory will contribute significantly to project outcomes. The information will help understand how institutions can better understand contemporary students and facilitate their success. When the project is complete, each participating institution will be sent an Institutional Benchmark Report. Broader findings and results will be published in a National Report.

With your assistance we are seeking to identify the most appropriate person/s within your institution who will be able to provide institutional information relevant to the project. I would be grateful if you could nominate the best person/s to assist by **returning the nomination form to [marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au)**.

We intend to protect the anonymity of your institution and the confidentiality of individuals' responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. No findings, which could identify any individual participant and/or institution, will be included in the final report and in any publications arising from the research. Confidentiality will be strictly observed. All data collected can only be accessed by project team members, which will be stored for 5 years before being destroyed, as prescribed by University's regulations. Please be advised that your institution's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice.

Should you require further information, or if you have any concerns about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me (as below), or the Project Manager Ms Marian Mahat at 03 9035 5630 or via email [marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au). Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 03 8344 2073, or fax: 03 9347 6739.

Yours sincerely

**SIGNED**

**Professor Hamish Coates**

Attached

- Institution Nomination Form
- Project Overview

## Email to nominated person(s)

NOMINEE NAME  
INSTITUTION NAME  
DATED



Dear NOMINEE NAME

In February 2015 a team of researchers across Australia and the United States started a project funded by the Australian Government titled 'Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience'. The project is funded by the Office for Learning and Teaching, and is a collaboration between the University of Melbourne, Indiana University, Janet Clarke Hall, Macquarie University, Navitas, University of Austin, Texas, University of Queensland and University of Western Australia. More information about the project can be found here: <http://www.olt.gov.au/project-innovative-perspectives-and-approaches-enhancing-student-experience-2014>

This study aims to bring about sustainable strategic change through improving institutional capacity to enhance the 21st century student experience by:

- building new concepts for understanding Australia's higher education students;
- identifying new data sources and approaches for measuring the student experience; and
- engaging institutions in enhancement work and new conversations about students.

We are seeking important information from all Australian universities and higher education providers that will be used to realise the project's objectives, which include developing new approaches to enhance and support the undergraduate student experience.

You have been identified by [VC/CEO name] as the most appropriate person at [institution name] to assist in the provision of institutional information relevant to the project.

A participation pack is attached and includes a project description and the Institution Inventory.

We would be grateful if you could complete the inventory by **INSERT DATE**.

Should you require further information, or have any concerns about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me (as below), or the Project Manager, Ms Marian Mahat at 03 9035 5630 or via email [Marian.Mahat@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:Marian.Mahat@unimelb.edu.au).

Yours sincerely

**SIGNED**

**Professor Hamish Coates**

## Project Overview

### Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience



This project was awarded funding from the Australian Government (Office of Learning Teaching) in 2014, in the strategic priority area of 21st Century Student Experience.

The project team is comprised of: Professor Hamish Coates, Project Director, University of Melbourne; Marian Mahat, Project Manager, University of Melbourne; Dr Linda Corrin, Project Researcher, University of Melbourne; Dr Jason Lodge, Project Researcher, University of Melbourne; Dr Ryan Naylor, Project Researcher, University of Melbourne; Dr Paula Kelly, Project Researcher, University of Melbourne; Professor Vic Borden, Project Expert, Indiana University; Professor Phil Long, Project Expert, University of Texas, Austin; Professor Sid Nair, Project Expert, University of Western Australia; Dr Damian Powell, Project Expert, Janet Clarke Hall; Professor David Wilkinson, Project Expert, Macquarie University; Helen Zimmerman, Project Expert, Navitas; and **Dr Kelly Matthews, University of Queensland.**

This study aims to bring about sustainable strategic change through improving institutional capacity to enhance the 21st century student experience by:

- building new concepts for understanding Australia's higher education students;
- identifying new data sources and approaches for measuring the student experience; and
- engaging institutions in enhancement work and new conversations about students.

To effectively manage the student experience, institutions must understand who students are and what they expect from higher education. Drawing together consultations with experts in recent years, the project seeks to create a major new line of work into the undergraduate experience. This project seeks to yield improved perspectives and approaches for institutions to understand students and enhance their experience.

This project builds capacity of higher education institutions by developing new perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience. The project will create and capture new value for Australian higher education by:

- generating insights on students, including in areas that have not been considered;
- contributing more nuanced and evidence-based insights into student expectations;
- producing data-driven approaches for enhancing the student experience;
- contributing a model that details constructs and approaches, a framework with implementation guidelines, and institution case studies for enhancing student experience; and
- building institutional engagement with new concepts and approaches.

We have deliberately positioned this project to build squarely on Australia's excellent research, policy and practice in this field, to launch invigorating and expansive conversations about students' experience, and to help institutions monitor and improve the quality of education. Further information is available from: [http://cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/experience/perspectives\\_approaches.html](http://cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/experience/perspectives_approaches.html)



## Institution Inventory



### Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience

Thank-you for participating in the research project: *Innovative perspectives and approaches for enhancing the student experience*.

This inventory has been designed to gather strategic information from Australia's higher education institutions to inform sector-wide practice for understanding higher education students, facilitating student success and how student data is used for these purposes.

The inventory is supplied in MS Word format to enable flexible completion and dissemination should you wish to forward any section to colleagues for feedback. It is organised into the following sections:

- Background and context
- Student Success
- Students
- Student Identity
- Data Collection and Use
- Institutional Change

We would be grateful if you could return the completed inventory by **Thursday 6 August 2015**. A project member may be in contact with you before this date to provide assistance if required. Alternatively, If you have further queries about the project or the inventory; or experience any difficulties completing the inventory feel free to contact Project Manager, Ms Marian Mahat at 03 9035 5630 or via email [marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:marian.mahat@unimelb.edu.au).

→ PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING LIST OF QUESTIONS IS LAYED OUT IN CONCEPTUAL RATHER THAN DESIGN FORMAT. ALSO, THESE QUESTIONS ARE SUPPORTED BY PHONE CONSULTATIONS.

<b>Institution background and context</b>
What is the <i>name of your institution</i> ?

What is/are <u>your name(s)</u> ?

What is/are <u>your title(s)</u> ?

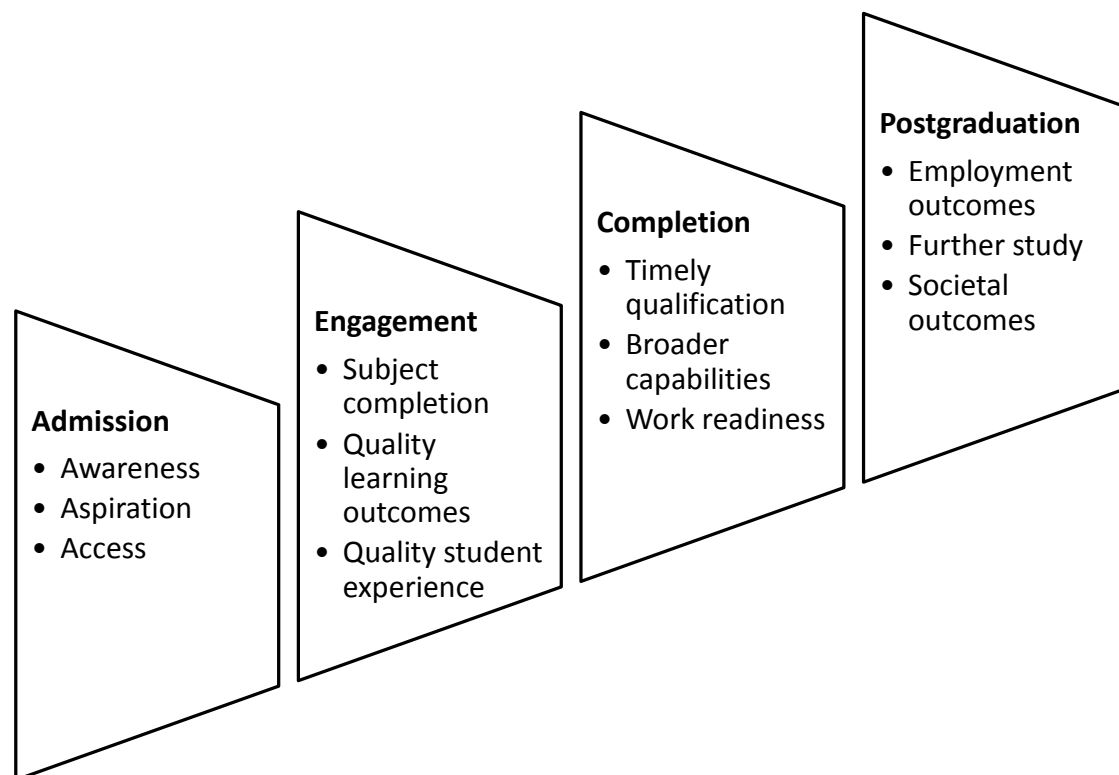
### Questions about 'student success'

In what ways does your institution define 'student success' in various plans and actions? What plans and actions are most relevant?

What is distinctive about your institution's approach to defining student success compared with other Australian higher education institutions?

Thinking generally, how do most students at your institution appear to define student success?

A model of student success is presented below, showing general labels for key progression thresholds. Does this model align with your institution's approach to student success? If not, why not? What is your institution's approach? What additional content or configurations would improve the model?



<b>Questions about your students</b>
--------------------------------------

Why do students choose your institution? What evidence is collected regarding student choice (e.g. market research, admissions feedback, administrative data, data on partnership programs, academic advice)?
---

Thinking across your institution as a whole, <u>what specific factors</u> would appear to be most important to helping students at your institution succeed?
--

What <u>evidence is collected</u> to determine whether students at your institution are achieving success as expected (e.g. institutional research, informal feedback, information from external studies, anecdotal feedback, staff feedback)?
--

How would you know whether each student at your institution is getting <u>personal, educational, professional, financial value</u> from her/his higher education? What mechanisms are in place to determine the value that your institution provides to students, and areas in need of improvement?
---

What steps does your institution take to find out what students <u>do after leaving your institution</u> (e.g. national surveys, alumni programs, institutional tracer studies, dropout surveys)?
---

### About student identity

How does your institution define/record students in formal administrative systems (e.g. mandated national data collections, psychological profiles, discipline/industry information, cognitive data)? What informal approaches to identifying students would appear to exist in your institution's infrastructure or culture?

In the two columns below, please list factors which may be important to understanding students at your institution. Examples include: age, gender, cultural background, family environment, living arrangements, online profiles, employment status, extra-curricular clubs, historical information from high school or other institution, friendship groups.

Not very important

Very important

How has your institution's student profile changed/diversified over the last five years? How has your institution responded to changing student profiles through new research, new data, new management approaches?

Describe the 'typical' sets of students at your institution? What are these typical students' essential sociological characteristics? Examples may include: socio-demographic matters, economic matters, educational pathways, ways of studying, learning engagement, etc.

Through what management-related data collections does your institution recognise and cater to student diversity (e.g. performance tracking systems, CRM platforms)?

<b>Data collection and use</b>
--------------------------------

Overall, what technologies, platforms and networks do your students use? Thinking across your institution, <u>what inquiries have been made</u> into what students are using?

What are the most widespread methods used by your institution <u>to source information on students</u> (e.g. admissions data, enrolment forms, market research)?

How does your institution use the information it collects <u>to support students</u> (e.g. external reporting, providing diagnostics to academics, feedback/advice to students, public reporting)?

What analytical/statistical information is <u>provided to students</u> on their study? How is this information represented to students?

Describe <u>your institution's maturity</u> in using data to support student success? What are specific opportunities for improvement?

### Academic leadership for institutional change

In general, what would it be most helpful for your institution to know about to help each student make her/his study more successful?

What additional feedback could your institution provide and to which stakeholders (e.g. academics, current or prospective students, public) to better help each student succeed?

The following attributes are important factors in executing and sustaining institutional change:

- Culture—the environment created by the totality of systems, structures and people;
- Structure—the operating framework including governance and management;
- Systems—the operational elements of the institution including IT systems;
- Leadership—the style of management and the strategic direction of the institution;
- Staff—the current breadth and scope of roles responsible for operationalising systems; and
- Skills—the development of staff skills and knowledge required to operationalise institutional systems.

In each box below rate the importance of each attribute for improving: student success; understanding students; and education analytics. Provide a score ranging from '1' (low importance) to '5' (high importance).

	Culture	Structure	Systems	Leadership	Staff	Skills
Student success						
Understanding students						
Education analytics						

To what extent do your institution's leaders use data to inform policies?

At your institution, what are the main obstacles to improving evidence-based approaches to understanding students and helping them succeed?