USQ Social Justice Strategic Plan

2017–2020

UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

Acknowledgement to Country

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

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

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

Introduction

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

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

To promote the transformative potential of higher education and research, the 2017–2020 SJSP broadly adopts a capability approach to set the conditions for all students and staff, regardless of their background, to achieve individually valued outcomes. Through a capability lens, social justice in higher education can be advanced by promoting individual agency, and by the removal of barriers to people's freedom to choose (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

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

STATEMENT 2017–2020

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

HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

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

The framework sets out 11 goals aligned to each pillar, and accompanying processes and procedures that have been guided by 5 interconnected and co-dependent principles of social justice: equity, self-determination, rights, access, and participation (Nelson & Creagh, 2013). Each principle contributes processes and procedures towards realisation of a goal and its intended objective and performance outcome. The framework was developed through a synthesis of melded goals, objectives and action set out in the Strategic Plan 2017-2020, the SJSP 2014–2015, and stakeholder identified opportunities for improvement. Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide a summary of the Social Justice Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

PRINCIPLES

ENSURE EQUITY

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

FACILITATE SELF-DETERMINATION

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

SAFEGUARDING OR ENHANCING RIGHTS

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

STRENGTHENING ACCESS

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

ADVANCE PARTICIPATION

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

TABLE 1 – EDUCATION PILLAR

EDUCATION: ENHANCING STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT

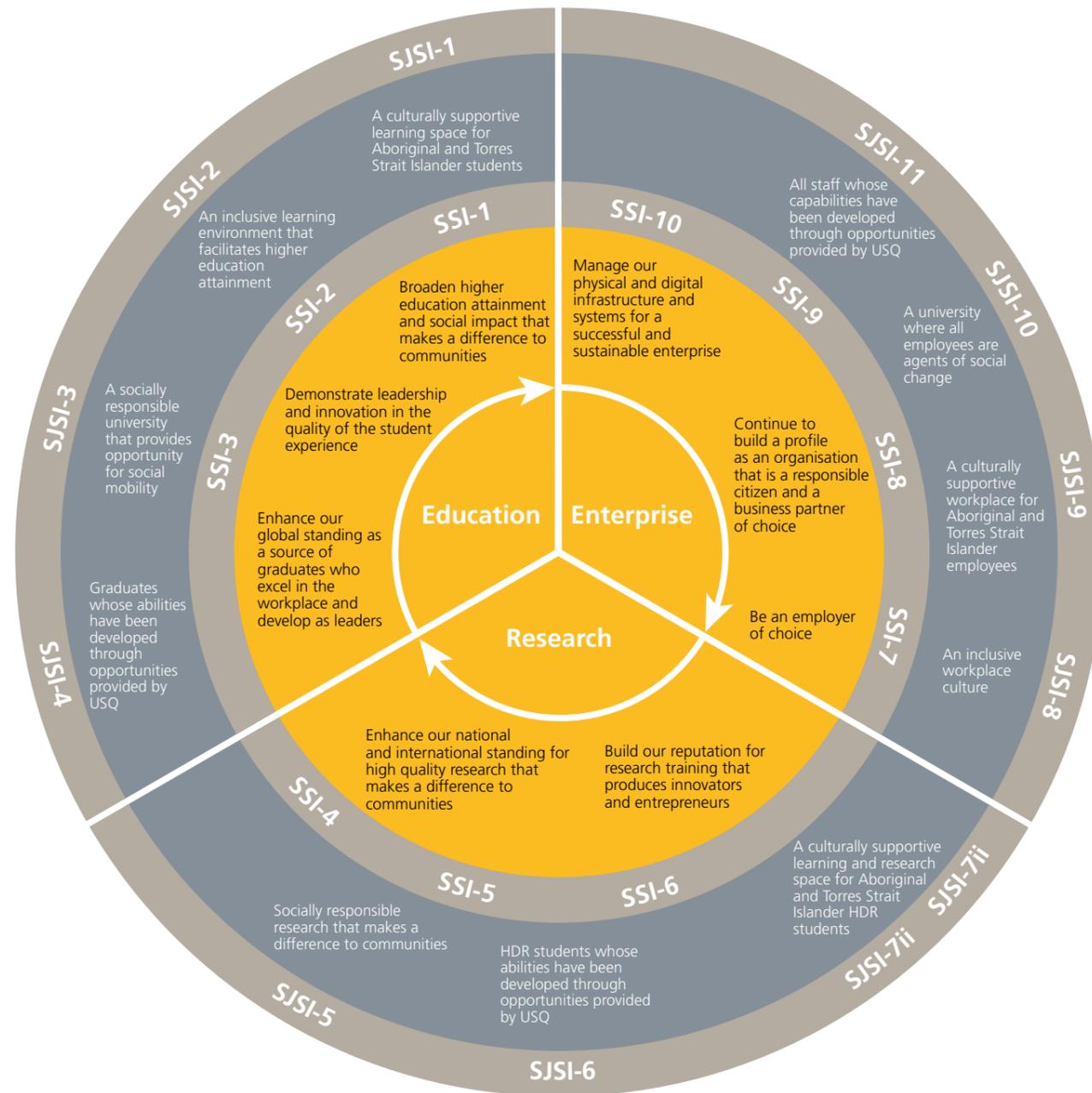| Goals	Processes and procedures					Performance outcomes
	Ensure equity	Facilitate self-determination	Safeguard or enhance rights	Strengthen access	Advance participation	
1. A culturally supportive learning space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Integrated and communicated student support systems from across the University to provide a holistic and coordinated service model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Enhanced support of student representation frameworks to progress and realise student identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues	All staff required to undertake cultural competency training, and provided with guidance on how to create culturally safe on-campus and digital classrooms	Continued strengthening and extension of communities of practice between Schools and Indigenous staff to ensure meaningful inclusion of culture into curriculums	Embedded, effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander equity programs	*SJSI-1 Increases in access and participation, retention, achievement and completion rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across degree programs*
2. An inclusive learning environment that facilitates higher education attainment	An integrated, extended, coordinated, and communicated student support system to provide a holistic service model for students with disabilities	Enhanced support of student representation frameworks to progress and realise student identified disability issues	All staff required to undertake training in Disability Awareness, and understanding the Disability Standards for Education	Educative and collaborative, cross-unit dialogue to facilitate access to USQ resources for students with disabilities	All managers supported to lead implementation of the Disability Action Plan	*SJSI-2 Continuing increases in retention and achievement rates of students with disabilities*
3. A socially responsible university that provides opportunity for social mobility	Embed effective equity programs that decode and demystify university processes and practices	Transparent entry requirements into USQ programs and courses	Costs of programs and courses are explicitly communicated to future and current students	Student measurement tools utilised to inform organisational learning	Outreach, career and marketing programs enable informed decisions about participation in higher education	*SJSI-3 Increases in access, participation and attainment rates, and improvements in graduate outcomes for under-represented groups*
4. Graduates whose abilities have been developed through opportunities provided by USQ	Supported development of learning and teaching models that engage with social, cultural and learning differences by promoting cross-unit, educative, and collaborative processes	Pedagogical and service models developed and implemented in partnership with students	Enhanced student feedback processes in relation to pedagogical and service models, on decisions directly impacting them, and on USQ performance	Supported curriculum design that is authentic, meaningful to students, has high academic expectations, and promotes free and fearless inquiry. Enhanced scholarships opportunities through partnerships with like-minded organisations and individuals	Incorporation of teaching and formative assessment tasks that address (and potentially resolve), student identified, local and/or global issues	*SJSI-4 Student assessment of skill development, teaching quality, and student support, at or above university benchmarks*

TABLE 2 – RESEARCH PILLAR

RESEARCH: GENERATING A RESEARCH CULTURE THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Goals	Processes and procedures					Performance outcomes
	Ensure equity	Facilitate self-determination	Safeguard or enhance rights	Strengthen access	Advance participation	
5. Socially responsible research that makes a difference to communities	USQ research projects achieve outcomes that lead to equitable benefits for communities	Enhanced research through collaborative partnerships with like-minded organisations and the general public that have benefit to local and global communities	Shared goals and benefits with research partners align to USQ's social justice principles	Research funding opportunities for social justice focused research through participation with like-minded organisations	Encouragement of USQ research that is socially inclusive of disciplines, communities, policy practitioners and decision makers	*SJSI-5 Increases in institutional reporting measures of discipline research engagement and impact*
6. HDR students whose abilities have been developed through opportunities provided by USQ	A decoded and demystified pipeline from undergraduate to HDR study	Facilitated research partnerships between HDR students and business, industry or community organisations	Opportunities for students to provide feedback on supervision and training	HDR scholarship opportunities expanded through partnerships with like-minded organisations and individuals	A supervisor training course that recognises the impact of social, cultural and learning differences, and the importance of career mentoring	*SJSI-6 Increases in participation, attainment rates, and employment outcomes for HDR students including those from under-represented groups in higher education*
7. A culturally supportive learning and research space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students	A decoded and demystified pipeline from undergraduate to HDR study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people Strengthened partnerships between CISER, disciplines and the Research Division to establish pathways and pipelines to HDR study	Facilitated research partnerships between HDR students and business, industry or community organisations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student self-determination in research subject matter and methodologies is encouraged and supported	Opportunities for students to provide feedback on supervision and training Expanded staff and all HDR students' knowledge of Indigenous research methodologies and ethical requirements Supervisory arrangements that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander associate supervisors if required	HDR scholarship and bursary opportunities expanded through partnerships with like-minded organisations and individuals Exploration of pre-masters/PhD courses to increase the pipeline of students able to pursue HDR studies	A supervisor training course that recognises the impact of social, cultural and learning differences and the importance of career mentoring Enhanced or facilitated USQ, regional and/or national Indigenous networks of HDR students	*SJSI-7i Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students' satisfaction with their research training experience, at or above the university sector* *SJSI-7ii Increases in participation and completion rates, and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students at or above the university sector*

TABLE 3 – ENTERPRISE PILLAR

ENTERPRISE: SUPPORTING USQ'S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Goals	Processes and procedures					Performance outcomes
	Ensure equity	Facilitate self-determination	Safeguard or enhance rights	Strengthen access	Advance participation	
8. An inclusive workplace culture	All policies, procedures and practices are equitable and inclusive	Staff are involved in the design of strategies to improve working environments Staff exercise personal agency in improving workplace issues	Staff are included in decision making on issues impacting immediate working contexts Leadership empowers staff to engage with, and contribute to, the resolution of issues	Continuing investment in support initiatives for diversity groups	Enhanced staff development to communicate the value of a diverse workplace	*SJSI-8 Staff participation and engagement levels at or above the university sector mean*
9. A culturally supportive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees	Embedded critical reflection on workplace procedures, practices and expectations that may pose barriers to participation	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are involved in the continuous improvement of workplace procedures, practices, and expectations	Culturally safe workplace cultures are embedded via USQ's leadership structure	Supervisors and managers have an understanding of historical, social and economic barriers to career and professional development activities	Professional development, mentoring and coaching programs are culturally appropriate	*SJSI-9 Participation and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at or above 3% of University employees*
10. A university where all employees are agents of social change	Policies, plans and procedures include analysis of equity and inclusion impacts Staff capacity to engage with accountability processes	Communication of social justice activity "feed up" and "feed across" the organisation	Broadened opportunities for organisational dialogue, and debate, on USQ's social commitment to education and research development	Effective equity service models are embedded into institutional funding	Organisational learning towards socially responsible service to students and communities	*SJSI-10 Increases in staff engagement with USQ's ethics, culture and values*
11. All staff whose capabilities have been developed through opportunities provided by USQ	Opportunities to discuss the management of teaching, service and research goals of USQ	Participatory opportunities for staff to discuss self-determined career goals	Staff are appraised of organisational expectations concerning University teaching, research and service goals	Supported staff, able to optimally engage with the teaching, research, and service goals of the University	Opportunities for educative and collaborative dialogue to inform USQ teaching, research, and support functions of the University	*SJSI-11 Increased engagement and satisfaction levels of staff*

ALIGNMENT TO USQ STRATEGIC PLAN 2016–2020

SSI-1: Student assessment of quality of educational experience at or above the university sector mean

SSI-2: Overall graduate satisfaction at or above the university sector mean

SSI-3: Consistent ranking in the top five for the sector in the proportion of students from low socio-economc backgrounds in the student body

Supporting Plans:

USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020, Educational Experience Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan, Indigenous Cultural Competency Framework, Disability Action Plan, Social Justice Strategic Plan 2014–2015, Research Plan 2013–2015, 2015 Indigenous Research Strategy, Employment Equity and Diversity Strategy 2014–2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Development and Employment Strategy, 2016 Employee Engagement Survey, Workforce and Talent Management Plan 2016–2020, USQ People Capability Framework.

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SSI-4: 10 per cent annual increase in total HERDC reportable research income (Cat 1-4)

SSI-5: Five per cent annual increase in average publication quality (defined as increase in the percentage of quality that comprise our total journal publication)

SSI-6: 10 per cent annual increase in income from industry and international partnerships and collaborations

SSI-7: Council approved financial targets for the University are consistently met or exceeded

SSI-8: Identified workplace diversity target for the University are met or exceeded

SSI-9: Employee engagement levels are at or above the university sector mean

SSI-10: One to two per cent reduction of carbon emissions against the 2015 baseline

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