Improving Learning

Assessment of university support services for regional and remote students on transition to university

Final Report (publication version)

The Australian Council for Educational Research acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Lands across Australia and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

ACER

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Executive Summary

Background and objectives

This report details the development and piloting of an *Assessment of university support services for regional and remote students on transition to university*.

The project forms part of the Australian Government's response to the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* (the Review) led by Emeritus Professor John Halsey. In its recommendations, the Review highlighted how critical it is to "Support RRR [regional, rural and remote] students to make successful transitions from school to university, training, employment and combinations of them". In relation to this recommendation, this project was designed to help the Australian Department of Education and Training (DET) better understand the support services that universities offer to RRR students on their transition to university.

The objectives of this project were to **design and validate a Framework for an annual assessment of the support services** Table A universities offer to regional and remote students on their transition to university; use the Framework to **complete a pilot assessment of the support services** offered to regional and remote students on their transition to university by all Table A universities; produce a **report of the pilot assessment**, including an evaluation of the Framework's application in the assessment.

The Assessment Framework

The Framework was developed and tested by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for the Australian Government Department of Education and Training (DET) in a three stage process – Project Scoping; Framework Development; and Piloting the Framework – spanning June and August 2018.

Scoping involved widespread consultation with universities, review of literature relating to support for RRR students, a detailed scan of digital resources and public websites of each Australian university, and exploration of relevant policies in place for supporting student transition to university. The project team conducted in-depth interviews with 38 relevant personnel from 14 different universities; visited three university campuses to gain additional understanding of services; and collected data on support service provision from 33 universities via an online survey.

The Assessment Framework developed is built around **four elements** identified through the consultation and scoping. These elements are:

- Resourcing
- Sense of belonging
- Communication
- Effectiveness

Each of the elements has a number of indicators that offer a measure of the outcomes or provision of support services by each university. Universities are assessed on each indicator

based on data collected through a self-reported university survey (designed as part of this project), and through student response data from the national Student Experience Survey. A four point 'traffic light' measure is used to make the assessment on each indicator.

Contextual information for each university, gathered through DET administrative data sets is also reported as part of the assessment.

Piloting the Framework

The Framework was tested through a pilot, which developed an assessment for each Table A university in Australia. The outcomes of this pilot, detailed in this report, suggest that such an assessment is feasible by utilising a self-reporting survey tool and extracting data from existing national Student Experience Survey.

The pilot assessment provides the DET a tool with which to more comprehensively understand the range of support services offered by universities, and the extent to which they are understood and used by students. It also has the potential to offer universities an opportunity to objectively review and reflect on their service provision for transitioning RRR students.

The outcomes of the pilot assessment help to highlight different provision and different situations of universities across Australia. For example, the results suggest that the universities for which RRR students are a significant part of their overall student population tend to have relatively strong spread of positive indicators across, whereas universities with smaller relative proportions of this group are less likely to have a consistently positive spread.

Next steps

It is recommended that this Assessment Framework is used on an annual basis to help both the DET and universities increase understanding of the way in which the needs of RRR students are supported in their transition to university. The Framework has the potential to highlight areas of best practice and identify areas for improvement so as to better support RRR student transitions.

In order to develop this into an annual assessment, it is suggested that:

- The Framework developed for the pilot should be reviewed by stakeholders and the sector to ensure transparency and to foster stakeholder co-operation.
- Future application of the Framework should be implemented in conjunction with current data for consistent, accurate measures.
- The annual university self-reporting survey developed in this project is sent to universities to collect data for the assessment.
- Four items be added to the Student Experience Survey, to improve the data collected in the assessment.
- The Department consider the most appropriate method of disseminating the results of future applications of the Framework (i.e. online platforms etc).

Introduction

Higher education student data shows that the rates of access, participation, retention and success for regional and remote students have been lower than those for all domestic students over a number of years. In 2017, the Australian Government commissioned an *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* (the Review) led by Emeritus Professor John Halsey[1]. The Review was part of the Government's commitment to improve the education of country students so they can reach their full potential and participate in Australia's economy. The final report of the Review included the following recommendation: "Support RRR [regional, rural and remote] students to make successful transitions from school to university, training, employment and combinations of them", and suggested some potential actions relating to accommodation. As a result of this recommendation, the Australian Government seeks to develop a better understanding of the support services Table A universities offer to regional and remote students on their transition to university, including accommodation.

Services in universities have been established to support students in their transition to, and throughout, their university lives. Providing support services that meet the needs of all students on their transition to university helps to facilitate student retention. Student retention and completion is impacted by how well universities target and communicate about their support services. Universities that identify the support required for first year students early, have a better chance of retaining those students. RRR students may have differing needs and expectations from their urban peers, which need to be supported to facilitate a smooth and positive transition experience. The prospect of relocating, living in high cost localities, moving away from family, and feeling a sense of belonging are important considerations for universities in supporting RRR students. Furthermore, students who are first-in-family (FiF) to attend university are most likely to come from a rural background. As a result, it is important for universities to collect data about how support services are meeting RRR student needs.

Project background

This project is designed to support the Australian Government's response to the Halsey Review by developing a Framework for a periodical assessment of support services which universities offer to regional, rural, and remote (RRR) students transitioning to university. The Framework is not intended to be a tool for measuring university performance, but rather a means of self-assessment for universities to review their current services.

The project objectives articulated by the Department of Education and Training are to:

- design and validate a Framework for an annual assessment of the support services Table A universities offer to regional and remote students on their transition to university

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[1] Hasley, J. (2018). *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education.* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

- use the Framework to complete a pilot assessment of the support services offered to regional and remote students on their transition to university by all Table A universities, and
- produce a report of the pilot assessment, including an evaluation of the Framework's application in the assessment.

Between June and August 2018, the Framework was developed and piloted. This report details the Framework's development and application in the pilot, and makes recommendations for its future application.

The Framework is designed to provide a platform for the Department to understand the support services offered by Table A universities and will enable a periodic assessment of these services.

Report overview

This report is divided into three main sections:

- Part One: Project Scope
- Part Two: Development of Framework
- Part Three: Pilot of Framework.

Definitions

Table A University

Table A universities in Australia as defined by the Higher Education Support Act (HESA) are public universities, funded by government.

Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR)

Regional, rural and remote (RRR) students are defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) definitions as any student whose home address is in an ASGS area defined as regional, rural or remote. This is the definition of RRR students used for this project.

Transition

Transition is defined, for the purposes of this project, as the transition from home to university in the first year of study. The transition involves relocating to university and living in on or off-campus accommodation for the study periods.

Student Experience Survey

The Student Experience Survey is an annual survey of university students in their first and later years of study. All Table A universities participate as well as many other higher education providers. The survey data are available through the Department of Education and Training or the Social Research Centre.

The project scope describes the process of knowledge gathering which enabled the development of the Framework.

The Development of the Framework section explains the rationale used in defining the Framework and defines the methodology for the use of the Framework.

Finally, the Pilot Assessment section examines the results of the pilot deployment and assesses the strengths and challenges of the Framework.

PART ONE: PROJECT SCOPING

Overview

In order to develop the Framework for the assessment of university support services for RRR students who are transitioning to university, a broad scoping exercise was undertaken.

This scoping and evidence-gathering was facilitated through a literature review and desktop research phase as well as stakeholder consultation with all Table A universities. The proposed Framework was developed following analysis of this evidence.

This section outlines the approach taken to scoping and then highlights the key themes and findings emerging from this exercise. The section concludes by explaining how these findings helped shape the development of the Framework.

Approach

Desktop research and literature review

The initial phase of the project involved the thorough examination of every Table A university's external website. The aim of this was to determine both the existence of student services and the ease of finding these services within the website, with a focus on students commencing university for the first time. The scan used six key terms relating to support services including: accommodation services, orientation and transition services, Indigenous support services, financial support, welfare and counselling, and health. Where supplementary information was identified, it was categorised as 'other' in a seventh category.

The review focused on the available services as well as the number of 'clicks' required to access information about each service. Accessibility to services was an important component of this review, and while the website is not necessarily the first contact the student will have with the service, it is relevant to understand whether the websites were easy to navigate and understand. The analysis of websites also included a review of whether the available information was a *service* provided by the Table A university or *advice* being passed on by the university. The key difference between a service and advice was defined as contact with the student. For example, a web page for counselling which referred the student to make an appointment with a university counsellor is considered a service. However a static web page with information about mental health is considered advice.

The policy and literature review drew from academic literature which was obtained via ACER Cunningham Library's subscriptions to multiple online databases, including (but not limited to) educational databases such as Informit Databases, A+ Education, EBSCOhost databases, PsycINFO and Learning Ground - Australian Indigenous Research Database.

The final component of this section of the project included a review of available data of RRR student enrolments at Table A universities, and retention and attrition rates of all students in higher education. The data used for this analysis are available from the Department of Education and Training and are collected in the Higher Education Information Management

System (HEIMS). In order to gauge the universities' success in retaining RRR students, the data were analysed for each university. If a university had high retention rates of first year students and they had a high RRR student population or high attrition rates and high RRR student population, these universities were shortlisted for an in-depth interview.

Furthermore, the review of websites in conjunction with the data analysis gave ACER researchers an indication of the key institutions, and student service practitioners, to engage with for in-depth interviews.

The full literature review and website scan can be found in Appendices C and D (Appendix D unpublished).

Stakeholder consultation

The project conducted a multi-faceted approach to stakeholder consultation. In-depth interviews were followed up in some cases with site visits, and all were complemented with an online survey which collected valuable information as well as served to pilot some variables for future collections. Key stakeholders for this project were identified and contacted via email to be interviewed regarding student support services for RRR students. All Vice-Chancellors were alerted to the existence of the project by the Department (refer Appendix A). The Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic, or equivalent) along with directors and managers within the student services department of each university were contacted by ACER to arrange operational participation (refer Appendix B). Following this connection, universities were chosen for in-depth interviews and site visits were arranged with support service practitioners. In-depth interviews were conducted with staff from fourteen universities, and site visits were conducted at three universities. Figure 1 shows the full stakeholder consultation strategy.

Universities for in-depth interviews were chosen based on their RRR student cohort, demographics, location and university grouping in order to gain further qualitative insights and a broad perspective of the RRR student experience. Some universities were chosen because of specific programs which were identified in the desktop research and review of university websites.

Site visits

In order to gain a deeper insight into student support services, site visits were conducted at three universities. Universities were chosen based on their RRR student cohort, demographics and location in order to gain further qualitative insights and a broad perspective of the RRR student experience. The universities chosen for site visits each have different characteristics while the priority selection criteria was to visit one metropolitan university, one regional university and one metropolitan university with regional campuses.

The project team met with various stakeholders within the universities, such as student services directors, scholarships and finance managers, accommodation services, and Indigenous support leaders. During these meetings a more in-depth discussion was had about student services for RRR students, building upon initial teleconferences.

STRATEGY
Develop Stakeholder Engagement Approach.

RESEARCH
Understand who the stakeholders and key contacts are in Table A universities.

DATABASE
Build Database of stakeholders participating in the project.

COMMUNICATION
Send emails to universities to inform them about the project.

PHONE CALLS
Conduct phone interviews with universities about support services.

FACE TO FACE CONVERSATIONS
Visit universities and have conversations with stakeholders in support services.

UPDATES OF PROGESS
Provide project progress updates to client via phone calls and reports.

FINAL REPORT
Submit final report to the Department for publication and dissemination.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Figure 1: Stakeholder Consultation Strategy

Development and implementation of the pilot

To solidify responses from the stakeholder interviews and site visits, and to reach universities that were unable to be interviewed, an online survey was sent to all universities. This also served to pilot questions that would form part of the Framework. An initial email with the survey link, as well as required reminder emails, were sent out to all Table A universities.

The survey first asked about services available to students who were transitioning to university, on an 'available/unavailable' basis, covering orientation and transition services, accommodation, financial support, counselling, welfare, health, careers, and religious services. Further questions about the types of contact the university has with students were also asked, including phone calls, mentor programs, and outreach programs. Specific questions were included about counselling services; they asked about the availability of the service with regard to waiting times and priority access. One question asked if the university collected data on the usage of the services and the quality and complexity of this data. These data help universities to understand the types of students using services and the frequency in which they do so, in order to improve services. Finally, to round out the survey, some open-ended questions were included to seek feedback about the most effective aspects of student services and those aspects most need of improvement. The complete instrument can be found in Appendix F.

Student survey

The aim of the student survey was to pilot a small number of items for which no other data sources were available. While interviewing university support services practitioners the researchers enquired whether their university would be able to assist ACER with participation in a brief student survey. A number of universities agreed in principle to participate and were contacted to complete a student survey.

Due to several recurring issues including: the short timeline for the survey, student survey fatigue, university guidelines about when, and how, their students are surveyed, and the timing of the survey (which was during semester break), only one university was eventually able to send out the student survey pilot on ACER's behalf. University A was able to send the survey to around 750 first year RRR students, from which 60 responses were received.

The survey consisted of four validation questions (that is, checking what course students are enrolled in and getting them to confirm that they have transitioned to university from a RRR area) and three pilot items (Refer to Appendix I for the pilot items). The items piloted followed a similar format to those asked in the current national Student Experience Survey.

The response to the survey enabled the research team to determine that the questions were worded in a way in which students were able to respond. The consultation which informed the development of the questions also provides confidence in the relevance and face-validity of the items. However, the survey pilot response numbers were not high enough to make any valid assessment of the statistical performance of the items of the four measures which were included in the pilot Framework.

Stakeholders consulted

Almost forty student service practitioners were interviewed from a sample of fourteen universities. The selection strategy applied included a number of facets. As mentioned above, universities with high RRR student enrolments and either high or low attrition rates were selected to interview. Other factors included: areas of interest uncovered in the website review, particularly good website access, particularly difficult website access. The list was finalised so that a broad cross-section of states, university groups, and regional universities was selected.

A list of the guide questions which ACER used for in-depth interviews can be found in Appendix E. These questions were not rigidly enforced, rather an open discussion was the basis for the interviews.

Themes and Findings

The literature review, desktop research and stakeholder consultation showed many areas of interest in student support services for RRR students, which the researchers used to start defining the Framework.

Student support services in universities have been established to assist students in their transition to, and throughout, their university lives. Providing support services that meet the academic and non-academic needs of students on their transition to university helps to facilitate student retention. RRR students may have differing needs and expectations from their urban peers which need to be supported to ensure a smooth and positive transition experience.

Support services at universities provide students with a range of advice and assistance with accommodation, orientation and transition, Indigenous student support, financial support, welfare and counselling, health, and other relevant areas of student need. Despite efforts by universities to make these services available for students, not all students may be aware these services exist or access them in their transition to university. As a result, and with an increase in student diversity in terms of backgrounds, abilities, and expectations[2], it is important for universities to collect data about how effectively support services are meeting RRR student needs.

It became apparent through the literature review and stakeholder consultations that there were several overarching areas which were critical in assisting an RRR student to transition into university.

There is an issue in defining the RRR student groups. The universities emphasise this should not always be as straightforward as just using the ASGS definitions. For example:

- RRR students who attend a regional university may still be living at home and not having the same transition issues as RRR students that are moving to a metropolitan university.
- RRR students in states such as Victoria and New South Wales are not as isolated from family as RRR students in states such as Queensland or Western Australia. RRR students in the geographically larger states are much less likely to be able to go home for the weekends.

Evidence suggests that if a university can retain a student through their first year, they are much less likely to leave their study from then on. Therefore much of the literature review focused on student retention. One of the most important factors for a university to retain their students was the total student experience[3]. Further evidence suggests the support students receive in their transition to university heavily influences their **sense of belonging**.

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[2] Macdonald, I. (2000). What do we mean by transition, and what is the problem? *Australian Journal of Engineering Education,* vol 9, no. 1, pp 7-20.

[3] Scott, G. (2005). *Accessing the student voice: Final report.* Sydney, NSW: University of Western Sydney.

Making connections with peers can help with navigating university life and feeling a sense of belonging in the university[4].

Student support teams are working to ensure students develop a sense of belonging to their university, are comfortable in their surrounds, and are aware of all the services that are available to them. Universities face the challenge of welcoming students who are new to university life, and in many cases big city life, while not overloading them. Universities with regional campuses, that were consulted, described their RRR students as looking for a 'country atmosphere' where 'everyone knows everyone' and they feel they 'belong to a community'. This sense of belonging is more important to RRR students than students who were raised in an urban environment.

Universities are also finding their students are becoming more focused on study from the start of their university experience, and as such orientation activities are moving away from more traditional fun and games and towards more information-based activities. This helps student's feel like they belong academically from day one because they understand what is expected of them, where to go, what book they need and who they will be meeting with.

For RRR students, their transition to university can present unique challenges. There is often a lifestyle change, a move away from family, and living away from the family home for the first time can all add to the challenge of transition and study. Other barriers which RRR students may face can be that they are the first in their families to go to university, or that they are in different stages of life to school leavers. For example most RRR students at University X are non-school leavers, and are more mature. These students may have family and employment needs to consider. Whether school leavers or mature-age students, a majority of RRR students are the first in their family to attend university which suggests they have less prior knowledge of university life. All of these issues relating to transition for RRR students need support from student services.

To ensure all students feel a sense of belonging, student support practitioners are working towards servicing the diversity of their student cohort including RRR students. In order to meet these aims, universities must **resource** sufficiently and in the correct areas.

Enabling students to use the provided services depends on university **communications**. A decision about when to contact, counsel or assist students in their transition is different at each university, but most universities are taking proactive approaches to assisting students through their transition into university. Universities who proactively telephone their students to follow up have shown their students engage more with their support services. Therefore, the need for a holistic approach from support services, faculties and colleges has been identified. In many cases this is already happening.

Although the main focus of this project is transitioning to university, other issues that student support service practitioners focus on also effect RRR students and have not been overlooked. Mental health issues are being reported as one of the main concerns facing all students. This

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[4] Perry, C., and Allard, A. (2003). Making the connections: transition experiences for first-year education students, *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 4*(2), 74-89.

situation concurs with outcomes from the Australian Human Rights Commission's report into sexual assault[5] which showed that students did not know where to go if they were a victim of sexual assault or harassment. The Universities Australia *Respect. Now. Always.* campaign was introduced following the release of the report with campaign initiatives including 24/7 support lines, along with a 10 point action plan for universities.

Many of the universities consulted made note that RRR students are more likely to access counselling with concerns around loneliness and isolation on their transition to university. Mental health awareness is an area that student liaison officers, who monitor students, are trained in so that they recognise factors of poor mental health in their students.

The **effectiveness** of student support services is an important factor for the stakeholders that were consulted. All of the interviewed support service practitioners are dedicated to assisting their students through transition. Knowing whether their services are reaching their students and enhancing their student experience is important to them.

In order for the Framework to meet the needs of the universities, the effectiveness of their services should form a part of the assessment Framework. Areas of effectiveness which are not currently measured in student assessments such as the Student Experience Survey include the students' perception of accommodation assistance and counselling services, as well as the helpfulness of counselling services and student mentoring programs.

The development of the Framework is underpinned by the gathered evidence based on literature about support service delivery in the transition to university, a desktop website review of Table A universities, stakeholder consultation, university visits, surveys, and a pilot of the Framework. The results highlighted four elements that were important in assisting an RRR student to transition to university including:

- **Resourcing**
- **Sense of belonging**
- **Communication**
- **Effectiveness**

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[5] Australian Human Rights Commission (2017), Change the course: National report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities.

PART TWO: DEVELOPMENT OF FRAMEWORK

This section describes the development of the Framework. It first details the structure designed, then describes each element and the indicators used within the elements to build the assessment. Background, context and justifications for the inclusion of each indicator is also discussed.

Structure of the Framework

The Framework is intended to be used as an annual assessment that is transparent and relatively simple to administer. The assessment is intended by the DET to:

- allow the department to develop a better understanding of the support services that Table A universities offer to regional and remote students on transition to university, including accommodation arrangements
- enable periodic comparison of services through the development of a standardised framework for assessment
- be made publicly available through the national higher education admissions information platform and the Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) website
- inform ongoing engagement with higher education stakeholders.

The Framework developed for this assessment has four key elements, each with a number of indicators which are able to be individually assessed based on a 'traffic light' type scale.

The four key areas form the top level of the Framework, these key areas labelled **'elements'** are:

- Resourcing
- Sense of Belonging
- Communication
- Effectiveness

Each element is broken down into **'indicators'**. Each indicator offers a measure of aspects of support and support services that are important to RRR students in their transition to university.

These indicators then have a specified **'measure'** for which to assess outcomes/performance. The Framework uses a four point traffic light type scale. These measures are:

- GREEN   Very good standard
- GRAM   Good standard, room for some improvement
- AMBER   Below standard, many areas for improvement
- RED   Well below standard

Notes on the four point scale:

- The four point scale provides nuance without being overly complex. This nuance is not necessary in every indicator with some measures requiring only two or three levels. This is due to limitations in availability of information and/or the dichotomous nature of the indicator being measured (where this is the case, these are explained in the discussion of elements and indicators later in the report).
- Some indicators can be measured as a yes or no response and these measures will be green or red.

Data collection mechanisms

The indicators within the Framework are designed to be assessed through the use of two key data sources. These are:

- A university survey, designed and piloted as part of this project, in which universities provide a self-assessment of a range of services and outcomes.
- The Department of Education and Training's Student Experience Survey (SES). An annual student survey administered across all Australian universities.

For the development of this project, a small student survey pilot was also administered to trial a number of survey questions that could be incorporated into the SES at a later date.

In addition to the assessment measures, the development of the Framework has also identified a number of important **context data**. The Framework presents four context items which are intended to aid interpretation of the outcomes for each university. This context information is derived from publicly reported Department of Education and Training data.

The Framework

The Framework is defined in detail in this section. Each element and indicator is defined and justified. Each measure is defined with its data source and relevant assessment measures. At the end of the discussion of each element, a summarised rubric is presented offering a one-page view of each element, its relevant indicators and the measures used in making an assessment of the indicator.

Element: Resourcing

'What the student needs'

Definition

Resourcing is the existence of support services to meet academic and non-academic needs of RRR students in their transition to university. Resourcing involves the availability of products and services relating to orientation, accommodation, financial assistance, counselling, wellbeing, and academic support.

Key Issues

All assessment items in this category are to be collected through an annual self-reporting survey which will be administered to universities. All of the questions used to define the items have been piloted and the definitions have been derived from the analysis of the pilot data. A full list of required questions for the university survey can be found in Appendix H.

Every university has a broad range of support services designed to assist students and provide a good experience for students throughout their university life. Some services such as career advice, and enrolment assistance are core to the business of a university, but the range of services and facilities required for the care and maintenance of a student is broad and includes both academic and life services.

Many of the student services are available to all students, not just RRR students. Support services for identified equity groups such as people with disability, Indigenous students and students from low-socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds have a high cross-over with RRR students.

To assess whether the resources available to RRR students are sufficient, the amount of 'specific' services need to be taken into account, along with the 'generic' services that are available to the student population.

The indicators for this element are accommodation assistance, financial assistance, emergency counselling, counselling waiting list, and referrals.

Indicator: Accommodation assistance

Context

Not all Table A universities provide accommodation services for their students. For those that do, accommodation is predominantly used by RRR or international students, particularly for metropolitan based universities or campuses.

Universities provide a variety of accommodation options for students, including on-campus, off-campus, or a combination of both. Universities may own and operate their own student accommodation, or have preferred partnerships with student accommodation groups such as UniLodge, Urban Nest or Atira. Furthermore, students may choose to pursue private accommodation options. Universities may provide financial support such as scholarships and interest-free loans to assist students in meeting their accommodation costs. Some universities who do not have accommodation available provide subsidies within their grants or scholarships in recognition that their RRR students will have to relocate. They may also assist students residing in rental properties with information about tenancy, bonds, and landlords.

Staff at university colleges and university-owned accommodations may engage and work closely with support services to provide assistance, resources, and advice for students transitioning to and living in the residences. These services may include leadership development, first aid training, mentoring, safety training, wellbeing programs, and other opportunities to meet the needs of students in their transition and throughout their first year living on campus. Furthermore, both university colleges and university-owned accommodations may have paid positions for senior students such as residential pastoral leaders, academic tutors, student life advisors, and wellbeing officers to provide support and advice to first year students in the residences.

Colleges and student accommodation might adopt a pastoral care or wellbeing framework which provides a 'homely' atmosphere for students who may be living away from their parental home for the first time. This extra care may include providing cafeteria or cooked meals.

Measuring

Initially the preferred option was to have an item which measured the proportion of RRR students who were receiving accommodation assistance of some sort. The option has proven to be impractical because when consulted, 83 per cent of universities did not know the proportion of students accessing accommodation assistance.

Another assessment technique which was considered was to measure the total amount of money given to RRR students to assist with, or provide, accommodation. This method of assessment was too reliant on university size and context to make any valid assessment.

A third consideration was to isolate assistance for accommodation by finance and 'other' support. However, given this element has a financial assistance indicator (see below), the risk of overlap in indicators may lead to double reporting of financial assistance. Universities have a weight of need scale for funding assistance. This scale may include other considerations such as whether the student is a person with a disability, from a low-SES background, or from an Indigenous background. As mentioned earlier, these equity groups often cross-over with RRR status and further blurs financial accommodation assistance measures.

The Halsey Review [6] and the Urbis Report [7] mention that some universities have accommodation guarantees for RRR students. The Minister for Education and Training asked for an increase in guaranteed places for RRR students transitioning to university[8]. Therefore an accommodation guarantee was another option considered for the accommodation assistance measure.

In order to have a measure which was applicable to all universities, the assessment item was simplified to assess whether universities were providing accommodation assistance for RRR students.

Collection and Assessment
This assessment item reporting on accommodation assistance overall will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

Is accommodation assistance, either financial assistance or priority accommodation, provided to regional, rural and remote students?

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   Yes, targeted accommodation assistance is available to RRR students

GRAM   Has accommodation assistance for the student population including RRR students

RED   No accommodation assistance is provided

The assessment item reporting on accommodation guarantee will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

Is an accommodation guarantee given to RRR students?

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   Yes, an accommodation guarantee is available to RRR students

RED   No, an accommodation guarantee is not available to RRR students

Indicator: Financial assistance

Context
Universities provide an array of financial assistance to help first-year students, such as scholarships (publicly and privately funded), grants, interest-free loans, emergency 'petty' cash, textbook and food vouchers, and rental subsidies. While universities provide a range of financial assistance for which all first-year students may apply, a student's home postcode and background can be given weight in the selection process. For example, students commencing university from a low-SES background, experiencing financial hardship, from a

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[6] Hasley, J. (2018). *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education.* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
[7] Urbis, (2017). Regional Student Accommodation Cost and Benefit Assessment. Urbis.
[8] https://www.senatorbirmingham.com.au/better-outcomes-more-opportunities-for-regional-rural-and-remote-students/

RRR location, and/or with Indigenous heritage might be weighted more heavily in the selection process for financial assistance. Furthermore, some universities may have scholarships and financial assistance schemes specifically targeted at RRR first year students, Indigenous students, or students with a disability.

Measuring
As with accommodation assistance, one key way to measure financial assistance would be to obtain a monetary figure, or a proportion of RRR students using financial assistance. To use a total amount would fail to consider university, and student context. The university survey showed that universities do not have the data available to assign a proportion to their financial assistance.

Collection and Assessment
This assessment item will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

> *Scholarships and grants specifically for RRR students are available.*

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN	Yes, specific RRR scholarships or grants are available
GRAM	Scholarships or grants are available to the greater student population including RRR students
RED	No targeted scholarships or grants are available to RRR students

Indicators: Counselling services
Context
The need for mental health and counselling services is at the forefront of university consideration. Students' mental wellbeing is important in retaining them in higher education[9]. Such support services can also help to minimise barriers to higher education. RRR students may be particularly susceptible to mental health issues as they are often away from their usual support groups, in many instances for the first time.

Counselling services include on-campus counsellors, off-campus private counsellor arrangements, online advice, 24 hour assistance, and student and academic mentors trained in providing referrals to on-campus services.

Measuring
All universities have counselling available on-campus, therefore the assessment item(s) need to include some nuance around the types and breadth of counselling services available. Therefore three indicators for measuring counselling services are included.

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[9] Perry, C., and Allard, A. (2003). Making the connections: transition experiences for first-year education students, *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 4*(2), 74-89.

Emergency counselling or crisis control is seen as very important to universities and their students. As such two thirds of universities currently have a 24 hour support line available while others have same day appointments for emergencies.

When consulted about the availability of emergency counselling services, 96 per cent of universities have either a 24 hour hotline or same day emergency counselling.

Universities also have varying methods of coping with **counsellor demand**. Some use their on-campus counsellors as a triage system for referrals to outside professionals, so that the range of students they can see is not narrowed by returning clients.

The item below on counsellor demand was piloted as part of the university consultation survey and the timeframes used in the measures were derived from the results. The survey showed that 20 per cent of universities were able to provide services at a Green level, while 12 per cent were at an amber level. No participating universities were at the Red level.

Having counselling available for students is important, however, so is having staff and senior students who are willing and able to **refer** students to the correct services, as this raises student awareness of services. It also ensures that at risk students are able to get appropriate professional help. Many universities are now investing resources into training academic staff and student mentors on recognising at-risk student characteristics and behaviours.

The pilot self-reported data collection from universities showed that 71 per cent of universities have trained academic staff who can refer students to counselling, while 83 per cent have trained senior students who can refer.

Collection and Assessment

The assessment item for the availability of emergency counselling will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

> *Availability of 24/7 counselling.*

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN	Both 24 hour counselling hotline and same day emergency counselling are available
GRAM	Either a 24 hour counselling hotline OR same day emergency counselling are available
RED	Neither a 24 hour counselling hotline OR same day emergency counselling are available

The assessment item that measures counselling service waiting times will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

> *Average waiting time for a student to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor.*

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   Within 6 working days

GRAM   Between 1 and 2 working weeks with RRR priority

AMBER   Between 1 and 2 working weeks with NO RRR priority

RED   Greater than 2 working weeks

This assessment item measuring access to trained individuals who can assess and refer students will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

Availability of trained academic staff and senior students who can refer students to counselling.

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   Has trained academic staff AND senior students who can refer students to counselling

GRAM   Has trained academic staff OR senior students who can refer students to counselling

AMBER   Has untrained academic staff OR senior students who can refer students to counselling

RED   Has NO academic staff or senior students who can refer students to counselling

Table 2: ELEMENT: RESOURCING

Indicators	Measures			
	GREEN Very good standard	**GRAM** Good standard, room for some improvement	**AMBER** Below standard, many areas for improvement	**RED** Well below standard
Accommodation assistance	Yes targeted accommodation assistance is available to RRR students	Has accommodation assistance for the student population including RRR students		No accommodation assistance is provided
Accommodation Guarantee	Yes, an accommodation guarantee is available to RRR students			No, an accommodation guarantee is not available to RRR students
Financial assistance	Yes, specific RRR scholarships or grants are available	Scholarships or grants are available to the greater student population including RRR students		No targeted scholarships or grants are available to RRR students
Emergency counselling	Both 24 hour counselling hotline and same day emergency counselling are available	Either a 24 hour counselling hotline OR same day emergency counselling are available		Neither a 24 hour counselling hotline OR same day emergency counselling are available
Counselling demand	*Average waiting time for a student to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor.* Within 6 working days	*Average waiting time for a student to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor.* Between 1 and 2 working weeks with RRR priority	*Average waiting time for a student to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor.* Between 1 and 2 weeks with No RRR priority	*Average waiting time for a student to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor.* Greater than 2 weeks
Referrals	Has trained academic staff AND senior students who can refer students to counselling	Has trained academic staff OR senior students who can refer students to counselling	Has untrained academic staff OR senior students who can refer students to counselling	Has NO academic staff or senior students who can refer students to counselling

Element: Sense of Belonging

'Student integration and fit'

Definition

Sense of belonging relates to how students engage in the university community and the affiliation they feel to the university. Student integration and affiliation are about feeling comfortable (for example, having a sense of belonging, feeling engaged), having confidence (for example, participating in class discussions), and participating in the academic and social aspects of university life (for example, membership of clubs, volunteering).

Key Issues

O'Keefe[10] emphasised that a sense of belonging is a key factor in determining retention of students. In their study about making connections and the transition experience, Perry and Allard [11] identified that the basic level of anxiety for new students was navigating the transition "experience of coming to and belonging in" a university community. Likewise, McKenzie and Egea's[12] First Year Experience Program Strategy Framework emphasises that a student's sense of identity and belonging should be at the core of their first-year experience to enable effective transition and engagement.

By knowing and understanding the factors that help students develop a sense of belonging in their first year, universities can design and implement services to support and facilitate these factors. These factors may include creating a welcoming environment, enabling positive relationships between students and peers, and students and faculty members, supporting wellbeing, respecting diversity and difference, providing safe spaces, sustaining connection to students post-orientation and throughout their first year, and offering pastoral care.

A sense of belonging may also include outreach programs which, while they are not directly related to first year experience, may have nurtured a sense of belonging in a high school student long before arriving on-campus.

Regional universities consulted for this project confirmed they deliberately strive to give their campuses a local community feel, where everyone knows everyone else. They have noted that many students start courses at metropolitan campuses and then transfer to regional campuses later in their qualification because the city environment was too different to the local community environment from where they came.

The indicators for this element are sense of belonging, perception of support to settle into study, orientation, mentoring, Indigenous perspectives, Indigenous cultural competency, and community outreach.

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[10] O'Keeffe, P. (2013). A Sense of Belonging: Improving Student Retention. College Student Journal, 47(4), 605-613(9).

[11] Perry, C., and Allard, A. (2003). Making the connections: transition experiences for first-year education students, *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 4*(2), 74-89.

[12] McKenzie, J., and Egea, K. (2016). Five years of FYE: Evolution, outcomes and lessons learned from an institutional program. A Good Practice Report. *Student Success, 7*(2), 65-76.

Indicator: Sense of belonging

Context

A sense of belonging is not a category easily quantifiable given that it can be seen as a feeling or perception. However, there are items in the annual Student Experience Survey which are already based on student perception which can be used as assessment items for sense of belonging.

Measuring

The Student Experience Survey item 'Sense of Belonging' is a readymade survey item which measures a student's perception of belonging.

To define the assessment item from the Student Experience Survey item the data was analysed by university, and filtered to first year students. The first year student analysis has been used to define the benchmarks for the assessment, however the assessment itself will be filtered to RRR first year students.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be collected from the Student Experience Survey data. The item proposed is:

> *Student sense of belonging to the university.*

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN	More than one standard deviation above mean item score
GRAM	One standard deviation or less above mean item score
AMBER	One standard deviation or less below mean item score
RED	More than one standard deviation below mean item score

In the case of Student Experience Survey items the scores are derived using standard deviations from the mean. The items used all have a standard deviation between 4.5 and 5.5 percentage points. As such, the measures use a rounded figure of 5 percentage point breaks from the mean. The mean item scores are the percentage of students that agree with the statement, this 'percentage agreement' is derived by combining the answers 'quite a bit' and 'very much'.

The Student Experience Survey benchmarks for the measures were calculated using 2016 Student Experience Survey data which was limited to all first year students.

The intent for the pilot and future iterations of the assessment is to use all first year students as the benchmark against which RRR student opinions are measured.

Indicator: Perception of support to settle into study

Context

Being a welcome participant in higher education is an important part of belonging. A student needs to feel that they belong to the academic side of the university experience as well as the social side. Whether a university makes a student feel academically welcome, and prepares them for study, are indicators of whether a student will feel a sense of belonging to the university.

Measuring

The appropriate Student Experience Survey item which measures a student's perception of academic belonging is the item on support received from university to settle into study. This measure will use the data from first year RRR students.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be collected from the Student Experience Survey data. The item proposed is:

Received support from university to settle into study.

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN	More than one standard deviation above mean item score
GRAM	One standard deviation or less above mean item score
AMBER	One standard deviation or less below mean item score
RED	More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Orientation

Context

Orientation is an important event in all university calendars. Some universities have multiple orientation opportunities throughout the year depending on their student intake periods. Throughout the orientation period, universities officially welcome new students, promote support services, engage with the students' family, host activities and events, showcase student associations and sports, and provide information about university life and academic preparation. Additionally, university colleges and residences provide orientation activities for their first year students.

Orientation is a point in time where first year students become familiar with their new community, meet new peers, select subjects for courses, participate in activities, and settle in to their accommodation. Many universities and residential colleges have mentors and/or buddy systems to help first year students' transition, and also provide resources such as welcome and information packs. Some universities may send out the welcome and information packs prior to the orientation period.

Measuring

Universities may host events specifically for different cohorts of students such as their RRR students, Indigenous students, and students with a disability.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

Has orientation programs specifically for RRR students.

For the assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   Has orientation programs for RRR students as well as general orientation for all students

GRAM   Has orientation programs for all students

RED   Does not have orientation programs

Indicator: Mentoring

Context

Mentoring programs in universities help support first year students to navigate the university community. Mentors are usually students in upper years and they are usually assigned a group of first year students who may be in the same faculty or residential college. In some universities, all first-year students are provided a mentor. Mentors provide support and information about navigating university life, studying, wellbeing, student associations and groups, and support services on and off campus. Mentors may connect via online or phone with their first year students before they come on campus for their orientation. This enables first year students to have familiarity with a mentor when they arrive.

Measuring

According to the results of the pilot university data collection, 88 per cent of universities have a mentor or buddy system, many of which have mentors who are trained to be able to refer students to counselling and other programs.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

Availability of a mentor or buddy program.

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   Has a mentor/buddy program with trained mentors

GRAM   Has a mentor/buddy program without trained mentors

RED   Has no mentor/buddy program

Indicators: Indigenous perspectives and cultural competency

Context

The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in support service delivery helps to foster access for Indigenous students. The visibility of Indigenous practices, symbols, images, and processes helps to empower Indigenous students to feel a sense of belonging and agency when engaged with the service. Universities can engage with their Indigenous staff, students, and wider Indigenous community to embed perspectives in their support service delivery and co-create ways to ensure Indigenous students are affected positively by the support service.

Guiding principles for developing Indigenous cultural competency in Australian universities[13] emphasise the importance of cultural competency training for all staff, and the inclusion of Indigenous cultures and knowledge as a visual and valued part of university life and decision-making. Furthermore, the investigation by Kinnane et al.[14] into the transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into higher education, noted the lack of cultural competency among university staff can lead to these students feeling withdrawn and separated from university life. Ongoing cultural competency learning for staff in support services can help to ensure the service delivery is consistently respectful and responsive to Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing[15].

These assessment measures are being included in the Framework due to the high proportion of Indigenous students that come from RRR backgrounds.

Measuring

It is important that all student support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges into service delivery and that all student services staff have cultural competency training. Therefore, two measures for Indigenous perspectives and cultural competency are included.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

Level of Indigenous perspectives in service delivery.

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN	Every support service has practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery
GRAM	A majority of support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery

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[13] Universities Australia (2011). Guiding Principles for Developing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities. Universities Australia.

[14] Kinnane, S., Wilks, J., Wilson, K., Hughes, T., and Thomas (2014). *'Can't be what you can't see': The transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into higher education.* The University of Notre Dame, Australia.

[15] Martin, K. and Mirraboopa, B. (2003). Ways of knowing, being and doing: A theoretical framework and methods for Indigenous and indigenist research, *Journal of Australian Studies, 27*(76), 203-214.

AMBER A minority of support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery

RED No support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery

This assessment item will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

Level of staff cultural competency training.

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN Staff in support services have ongoing cultural competency training about Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges

GRAM Staff in support services have cultural competency training based on need about Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges

AMBER Staff in support services have one-off cultural competency training about Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges

RED Staff in support services have no cultural competency training about Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges

Indicator: Community outreach

Context

In earlier drafts of the Framework it was envisioned the Student Experience Survey item pertaining to academic preparedness would be included in this sense of belonging category. Upon further analysis, there was not enough differentiation in this item to be useful, and consultation with the Department suggested that academic preparedness was an area which universities do not have enough control over. Academic preparedness could also be measured using the Student Experience Survey item 'received support to settle in'. These were both valid reasons to eliminate the item from the Framework.

Community outreach activities aim to create awareness about higher education and includes activities such as school visits, skills development, and careers fairs.

Community outreach programs that universities provide are somewhat different to other support services because they must not be used as marketing for the university, but rather as a program to raise students' awareness and aspirations regarding higher education on the whole. For example, the Queensland universities have an agreement of regions which each are responsible for outreach. The universities are able to work together like this because they are not necessarily promoting their services at the expense of their competitors.

However, universities that provide community outreach report their first year students feel comfortable in their surrounds at university because they have been prepared while in schooling.

It is therefore the view of the researchers that academic preparedness and outreach services do influence the transition to university, particularly for RRR students. If a student arrives on-campus on day one and is not familiar with how to study at university or what academic referencing is, then they are highly unlikely to feel like they are in a place where they belong, no matter how many services are available to them.

Outreach programs for RRR students can include programs which invite groups of students onto campus for a few days to 'test' what university is like. In many cases, these can offer insight into what metropolitan life is like for RRR students, Indigenous students and/or students with a disability.

Outreach programs often include visits to communities and high schools in RRR areas to make higher education a recognised and accepted proposition. Outreach can mean that an RRR student is comfortable with the idea of higher education from an early age and is prepared for study through orientation camps before they apply for admission. It may also mean that students are prepared for study through programs to develop foundation and academic skills before being enrolled in undergraduate degrees.

Measuring
The pilot university data collection showed that over 90 per cent of universities conduct community outreach programs in RRR locations.

Collection and Assessment
This assessment item will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

> *Has community outreach programs to promote university attendance specifically targeted at RRR areas and/or Indigenous students.*

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN Have community outreach programs to promote university attendance targeting both RRR areas and Indigenous students

GRAM Have outreach programs to promote university attendance targeting RRR areas but NOT specifically for Indigenous students

AMBER Have outreach programs to promote university attendance targeting Indigenous students but NOT specifically RRR areas

RED Do not have community outreach programs to promote university attendance targeting RRR areas or Indigenous students

Table 3: ELEMENT: SENSE OF BELONGING

Indicators	Measures			
	GREEN Very good standard	**GRAM** Good standard, room for some improvement	**AMBER** Below standard, many areas for improvement	**RED** Well below standard
Sense of belonging	Student Experience Survey item score* *Had a sense of belonging to your university* More than one standard deviation above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Had a sense of belonging to your university* One standard deviation or less above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Had a sense of belonging to your university* One standard deviation or less below mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Had a sense of belonging to your university* More than one standard deviation below mean item score for all first year students
Perception of support to settle into study	Student Experience Survey item score* *Received support from university to settle into study* More than one standard deviation above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Received support from university to settle into study* One standard deviation or less above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Received support from university to settle into study* One standard deviation or less below mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Received support from university to settle into study* More than one standard deviation below mean item score for all first year students
Orientation	Has orientation programs for RRR as well as general orientation for all students	Has orientation programs for all students		Does not have orientation programs
Mentoring	Has a mentor/buddy program with trained mentors	Has a mentor/buddy program without trained mentors		Has no mentor/buddy program
Indigenous perspectives	Every support service has practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery	A majority of support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery	A minority of support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery	No support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery
Indigenous cultural competency	Staff in support services have ongoing cultural competency training about Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledges	Staff in support services have cultural competency training based on need about Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledges	Staff in support services have one-off cultural competency training about Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledges	Staff in support services have no cultural competency training about Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledges
Community outreach	Have community outreach programs to promote university attendance targeting both RRR areas and Indigenous students	Have outreach programs to promote university attendance targeting RRR areas but NOT specifically for Indigenous students	Have outreach programs to promote university attendance targeting Indigenous students but NOT specifically RRR areas	Do not have community outreach programs to promote university attendance targeting RRR areas or Indigenous students

*Student Experience Survey data is assessed with first year RRR students only

Element: Communication

'Informing students about services'

Definition

Without appropriate communication, student support services would go under-utilised. Universities communicate with their students regularly, but the frequency, timing and content of those communications are critical to ensure that services are made available to first year students at appropriate times.

Key Issues

Throughout the stakeholder consultation, universities made note that during orientation students are being given so much information that overload is almost inevitable.

It is important that communications to students are proactive rather than passive. Every university has information on their website, but that means that a student needs to be actively looking for something which they may not know is available.

Detailed communication plans are now being developed in universities so that students are transitioned into university and made aware of available services through appropriate and timely communications. These plans design and develop communication efforts that influence a student's decision making process.

Some universities have an integrated marketing communication plan (IMCP) that includes targeted marketing efforts for first year students who are from a RRR location, are Indigenous, and/or have a disability. As part of the IMCP, universities need to have clear objectives and ways to measure the effectiveness of their communication efforts to understand whether they were effective in reaching and creating awareness among the target market.

Universities use a variety of communication mediums to make students aware of the support services available at the university. All universities have a website that can be accessed by the public. Analysis of the 38 Table A university websites demonstrated there is an array of access points for information about support services for first year students. Additionally, universities may have print materials like brochures, posters, information guides, and post cards on campus. Universities also use electronic and social marketing mediums such as SMSs, email, websites (internal portals and public portals), pop-up chats, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter to create awareness about support services.

The consultation process for this project found that some universities use proactive communications to reach their target market, such as, calling or emailing first year students in the period between acceptance and enrolment, and during first term. Furthermore, universities may amplify their communications about specific services when they know students will need them (for example, tutoring services before exams).

The indicators for this element are proactive, specialised communications, availability of support services, availability of academic support, availability of accommodation assistance, and availability of counselling services.

Indicator: Proactive/specialised communications

Context

Getting relevant information to students at appropriate times is becoming more important to universities. Orientation week (O-week) programs are very useful for new students, however, students may be bombarded with more information than they can process. Stakeholder consultations have indicated that staggered communications, which provide student support services when they might be required, can be complementary to the information overload that takes place during O-week.

These staggered communications may include: a phone call before O-week to invite the student to events, academic assistance emails in week one of the semester, or counselling posters around the library leading up to exam periods.

Throughout the stakeholder consultation, universities asserted they are implementing phone calls to first year students, as often as possible, through their first semester. Some universities have scheduled phone calls after weeks four and eight, while others ensure they speak to the enrolling student following course acceptance. Universities find these phone calls are more personal and help to create a bond between students and the university. They are also more reliable than emails which can be lost in in-boxes, or never received as unreliable Internet access.

Measuring

Initially consideration was given to having two measures, one for proactive communications, and the other for targeted communications. There is a lot of crossover between these two measures, for example, institutions may proactively call students at enrolment, just before exams, or during O-week. Therefore, these measure have been combined.

Consultation with the participating universities indicated that telephone communications are more effective than email or other forms of communication, telephone calls have been given a greater weight in this measure.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

> *Number of times university proactively called students in semester one.*

> *Peak time contact with students.*

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN	Proactively CALL first year RRR students during semester one AND contacts students with appropriate communications at peak times
GRAM	Proactively EMAIL first year RRR students during semester one with no phone calls AND contacts students with appropriate communications at peak times

AMBER No proactive communications to first year RRR students during semester one BUT contacts students with appropriate communications at peak times

RED No proactive communications to first year RRR students during semester one OR contacts students with appropriate communications at peak times

Indicator: Availability of support services

Context

The student perception of the availability of support services is an indicator of student awareness of the services. Awareness of services is raised by university communications, therefore, if a student is not aware of the support services the communication from the university is in need of improvement.

Measuring

The Student Experience Survey has an appropriate item for measuring the availability of support services. The Survey is embedded in the higher education research sector and is a validated instrument.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be collected from the Student Experience Survey item 'Availability of support services'. The item proposed is:

Support services - available

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Availability of academic support

Context

The Student Experience Survey has an appropriate item for measuring student perception of the availability of academic support.

Measuring

The Student Experience Survey has an appropriate item for measuring the availability of academic support.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be collected from the Student Experience Survey 'Availability of academic or learning support'. The item proposed is:

Academic or learning support - available

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM   One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED   More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Availability of accommodation assistance

Context

Stakeholder consultation showed that accommodation assistance is one of the main reasons RRR students utilise student support services in their first year.

Measuring

The measure to assess the availability of accommodation assistance was included in the pilot student survey. The question was designed to use the standard Student Experience Survey format.

Collection and Assessment

The student survey item piloted for this project 'Availability of accommodation assistance' will be the assessment item:

Accommodation assistance - available

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM   One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED   More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Availability of counselling services

Context

Stakeholder consultation also showed that RRR students are more likely than other first year cohorts to access counselling services.

Measuring

The measure to assess the availability of counselling services was included in the pilot student survey. The question was designed to use the standard Student Experience Survey format.

Collection and Assessment

The student survey item piloted for this project 'Availability of counselling services' will be the assessment item:

Counselling services - available

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM   One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER   One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED   More than one standard deviation below mean item score

The student survey items designed as part of this project that form relevant parts of the assessment Framework are detailed below. For an ongoing assessment, it is recommended that these items are administered as part of the student Experience Survey and should be grouped along with the student support items in the questionnaire.

In your first year at university, to what extent have you found the following support services to be <u>available</u> for regional, rural and remote students?

Accommodation services
Counselling
> Not at all
> Very little
> Some
> Quite a bit
> Very much

In your first year at university, to what extent have you found the following support services to be <u>helpful</u> for regional, rural and remote students?

Counselling
Mentoring
> Not at all
> Very little
> Some
> Quite a bit
> Very much

Table 4: ELEMENT: COMMUNICATION

	Measures			
	GREEN Very good standard	**GRAM** Good standard, room for some improvement	**AMBER** Below standard, many areas for improvement	**RED** Well below standard
Proactive/ specialised communications	Proactively CALL first year RRR students during semester one AND contacts students with appropriate communications at peak times	Proactively EMAIL first year RRR students during semester one with no phone calls AND contacts students with appropriate communications at peak times	No proactive communications to first year RRR students during semester one BUT contacts students with appropriate communications at peak times	No proactive communications to first year RRR students during semester one OR contacts students with appropriate communications at peak times
Availability of support services	Student Experience Survey item score* *Support services: available* More than one standard deviation above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Support services: available* One standard deviation or less above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Support services: available* One standard deviation or less below mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Support services: available* More than one standard deviation below mean item score for all first year students
Availability of academic support	Student Experience Survey item score* *Academic or learning advisors: available* More than one standard deviation above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Academic or learning advisors: available* One standard deviation or less above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Academic or learning advisors: available* One standard deviation or less below mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Academic or learning advisors: available* More than one standard deviation below mean item score for all first year students
Availability of accommodation assistance	More than one standard deviation above mean item score	One standard deviation or less above mean item score	One standard deviation or less below mean item score	More than one standard deviation below mean item score
Availability of counselling services	More than one standard deviation above mean item score	One standard deviation or less above mean item score	One standard deviation or less below mean item score	More than one standard deviation below mean item score

*Student Experience Survey data is assessed with first year RRR students only

(Note: Indicators label runs vertically along the left side of the table rows.)

Element: Effectiveness

'Is the student helped?'

Definition

Services need to be useable and effective in supporting RRR students in their transition to university.

Key Issues

The majority of indicators in this element are taken from the Student Experience Survey data and target the students' perception regarding the student services that are available to them.

The indicators for this element are data analytics, helpfulness of support services, helpfulness of academic support, helpfulness of orientation, relevance of support offered, helpfulness of counselling services, and helpfulness of mentoring.

Indicator: Monitoring usage of services

Context

Universities need to be equipped to monitor the use and effectiveness of their individual services. The process of analysing data to measure effectiveness is extremely relevant to universities. However, the stakeholder consultation showed that not all universities are equal in their collection of data related to their student support services.

The universities which collect a lot of data are able to make complex decisions related to effectiveness of their services. These data may include specific services accessed by RRR students or other equity groups, how many times individuals accessed each service and whether they were followed up proactively by the university. However, many universities have some data which cannot be related to other student administration databases, such as enrolment or course data. Those universities understand what resourcing is required for their support services, but are not able to determine who exactly is using their services.

While data analytics is not a support service directly it is a support to the support services. Institutions with good data analytics will be able to identify cohorts of students who use their services, as well as cohorts of students who may be thinking of leaving their course of study. Correct management and use of data analytics will improve the delivery of support services to RRR students as well as other cohorts.

Measuring

One of the identified areas of importance with data analytics is how well support service data is linked to other university data. Some consulted universities made note they know how many students use each service, but they have no mechanism to identify them or their circumstances. Therefore the ability to link the support service data to enrolment data, or at least to collect detailed data, is the theme of the measure.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be self-reported by universities through the university survey. The item proposed is:

University data collected about the use of student support services.

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   Collect detailed data on support service usage. It is able to be narrowed to RRR student usage

GRAM   Collect detailed data on support service usage. Able to narrow to some equity groups, not RRR students

AMBER   Collect limited, decentralised data

RED   Collect no data on support service usage

Indicator: Helpfulness of support services

Context

The Student Experience Survey collects data on the helpfulness of several aspects of the student experience including the helpfulness of student support services. Therefore the data will be taken from the Student Experience Survey results for RRR first year students.

Measuring

The Student Experience Survey has an appropriate item for measuring the helpfulness of student services.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be collected from the Student Experience Survey data. The item proposed is:

Student services - helpful

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM   One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER   One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED   More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Helpfulness of academic support

Context

The Student Experience Survey collects data on the helpfulness of several aspects of the student experience including the helpfulness of academic support. Therefore the data will be taken from the Student Experience Survey results for RRR first year students.

Measuring

The Student Experience Survey has an appropriate item for measuring the helpfulness of academic support.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be collected from the Student Experience Survey data. The item proposed is:

Academic or learning advisors - helpful

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Helpfulness of orientation

Context

The Student Experience Survey collects data on the helpfulness of several aspects of the student experience including the helpfulness of induction or orientation activities. Therefore the data will be taken from the Student Experience Survey results for RRR first year students.

Measuring

The Student Experience Survey has an appropriate item for measuring the helpfulness of induction or orientation activities.

Collection and Assessment

This assessment item will be collected from the Student Experience Survey data. The item proposed is:

Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Relevance of support offered

Context
In order for university support services to be effective they must be relevant.

Measuring
The measure for relevance of support is derived from Student Experience Survey data for first year RRR students. It is a measure of whether university support was relevant to a student's circumstances.

Collection and Assessment
This assessment item will be collected from the Student Experience Survey data. The item proposed is:

Offered support relevant to circumstances

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Helpfulness of counselling services

Context
Stakeholder consultation shows that RRR students are more likely than other first year cohorts to access counselling services.

Measuring
The measure to assess the helpfulness of counselling services was included in the pilot student survey. The question was designed to use the standard Student Experience Survey format.

Collection and Assessment
The student survey item piloted for this project 'Helpfulness of counselling services' will be the assessment item:

Counselling services - helpful

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Indicator: Helpfulness of mentoring

Context

Mentors or buddy systems can ease the transition of first year students by giving them a peer for their first point of contact with the university.

Measuring

The measure to assess the helpfulness of mentoring was included in the pilot student survey. The question was designed to use the standard Student Experience Survey format.

Collection and Assessment

The student survey item piloted for the project 'Helpfulness of mentoring or buddy system' will be the assessment item:

Mentoring or buddy system - helpful

The assessment responses to this item will be categorised as follows.

GREEN   More than one standard deviation above mean item score

GRAM   One standard deviation or less above mean item score

AMBER   One standard deviation or less below mean item score

RED   More than one standard deviation below mean item score

Table 5: ELEMENT: EFFECTIVENESS

	Measures			
	GREEN Very good standard	**GRAM** Good standard, room for some improvement	**AMBER** Below standard, many areas for improvement	**RED** Well below standard
Monitoring usage of services	Collect detailed data on support service usage. It is able to be narrowed to RRR usage	Collect detailed data on support service usage. Able to narrow to some equity groups, not RRR	Collect limited, decentralised data	Collect no data on support service usage
Helpfulness of support services	Student Experience Survey item score* *Support services: helpful* More than one standard deviation above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Support services: helpful* One standard deviation or less above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Support services: helpful* One standard deviation or less below mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Support services: helpful* More than one standard deviation below mean item score for all first year students
Helpfulness of academic support	Student Experience Survey item score* *Academic or learning advisors: helpful* More than one standard deviation above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Academic or learning advisors: helpful* One standard deviation or less above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Academic or learning advisors: helpful* One standard deviation or less below mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Academic or learning advisors: helpful* More than one standard deviation below mean item score for all first year students
Helpfulness of orientation	Student Experience Survey item score* *Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful* More than one standard deviation above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful* One standard deviation or less above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful* One standard deviation or less below mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful* More than one standard deviation below mean item score for all first year students
Relevance of support offered	Student Experience Survey item score* *Offered support relevant to circumstances* More than one standard deviation above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Offered support relevant to circumstances* One standard deviation or less above mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Offered support relevant to circumstances* One standard deviation or less below mean item score for all first year students	Student Experience Survey item score* *Offered support relevant to circumstances* More than one standard deviation below mean item score for all first year students
Helpfulness of counselling services	More than one standard deviation above mean item score	One standard deviation or less above mean item score	One standard deviation or less below mean item score	More than one standard deviation below mean item score
Helpfulness of mentoring	More than one standard deviation above mean item score	One standard deviation or less above mean item score	One standard deviation or less below mean item score	More than one standard deviation below mean item score

*Student Experience Survey data is assessed with first year RRR students only

PART THREE: PILOT OF FRAMEWORK

Pilot methodology

The process of piloting the Framework involved the collation of four data sources:

- **2016 Student Experience Survey data** (provided by the Department of Education and Training)
    - The Student Experience Survey data used for assessing a university included only first year RRR students.
- Pilot **university self-reporting survey** data (collected by ACER online)
- **Student survey** data (collected by ACER online)
- **University enrolment data** 2016 (sourced from the Department of Education and Training)

These data sources were then mapped to the Framework for each university.

The development of the Framework has been an iterative process and the pilot results have been used to adjust the measures. Because of this, some measures have been subsequently perfected, they are not used in the pilot. These measures have been left blank where applicable.

For example, the student survey was conducted by one university, therefore, only that university has any results for the newly developed student measures. The new student questions were based on similar Student Experience Survey items and, as such, do not require as much testing as other new questions might.

Other measures have been adjusted since the pilot, such as the mentors measure which asked a 'Yes or No' question but without the nuance of whether mentors have been trained. In instances such as this, the pilot data have been applied with a best fit method and adjustments have been made to the recommended university survey so as to ensure collection in the full implementation of the assessment.

The pilot self-reporting survey was delivered to 38 Table A universities with 33 completing. Appendix F shows the questionnaire which was delivered to universities while the examples in the section 'Applied Pilot Data' defines the questions which make up each measure and how they were applied to the pilot.

The Student Experience Survey benchmarks for the measures were calculated using 2016 Student Experience Survey data focussing on first year students' responses, with scores derived using standard deviations from the mean. The items used all have a standard deviation between 4.5 and 5.5 percentage points. As such, the measures for the pilot use a rounded figure of 5 percentage point breaks from the mean. The mean item scores are the percentage of students that agree with the statement. This 'percentage agreement' is derived by combining the answers 'quite a bit' and 'very much'.

In the sections below, the overall structure of the developed reporting Framework for universities is described. The data from four de-identified example universities are used to demonstrate the application of the Framework. The examples, and all other universities (refer Appendix J, unpublished), are mapped to the template along with the university's contextual items.

Framework Template

University Name: XXXXXX

University Context

First year domestic population: XXXX (national average = XXXX)
First year RRR population: XXXX (national average = XXXX)
RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: XX.X% (national average = XX.X%)
Campus location: XXXX

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	
	Accommodation guarantee	
	Financial assistance	
	Emergency counselling	
	Counselling demand	
	Referrals	
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	
	Perception of support to settle into study	
	Orientation	
	Mentoring	
	Indigenous perspectives	
	Indigenous cultural competency	
	Community outreach	
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	
	Availability of support services	
	Availability of academic support	
	Availability of accommodation assistance	
	Availability of counselling services	
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	
	Helpfulness of support services	
	Helpfulness of academic support	
	Helpfulness of orientation	
	Relevance of support offered	
	Helpfulness of counselling services	
	Helpfulness of mentoring	

Applied Pilot Data

Pilot results have been mapped for all universities, these summaries can be found in Appendix I (Appendix I, unpublished). This section demonstrates the application of the framework using **four de-identified universities as examples**.

University A

University Name: University A

University Context

First year domestic population: Approx. 10,000 (national average = 9,717)

First year RRR population: Approx. 4,000 (national average = 2,283)

RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: Approx. 45% (national ave = 26.5%)

Campus location: Regional

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	Financial & priority assistance
	Accommodation guarantee	No
	Financial assistance	RRR scholarships available
	Emergency counselling	24hr hotline
	Counselling demand	1-2 days
	Referrals	Staff and student referrals
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	38.7%
	Perception of support to settle into study	54.0%
	Orientation	All students
	Mentoring	No
	Indigenous perspectives	*[estimate]*
	Indigenous cultural competency	*[not assessed]*
	Community outreach	RRR
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	Proactive calls and specialised communication
	Availability of support services	62.0%
	Availability of academic support	58.5%
	Availability of accommodation assistance	33.33%
	Availability of counselling services	33.33%
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	Detailed
	Helpfulness of support services	61.8%
	Helpfulness of academic support	61.2%
	Helpfulness of orientation	52.9%
	Relevance of support offered	46.6%
	Helpfulness of counselling services	33.33%
	Helpfulness of mentoring	25.00%

Context

> **University Name:** University A
>
> **University Context**
>
> First year domestic population: Approx. 10,000 (national average = 9,717)
>
> First year RRR population: Approx. 4,000 (national average = 2,283)
>
> RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: Approx. 45% (national ave = 26.5%)
>
> Campus location: Regional

- The contextual items demonstrate the depth of RRR students at a university while remaining succinct.
    - The University A first year population is about an average intake compared to the national average.
    - The University A RRR first year population is double the national average.
    - Therefore, they are a university with a much higher RRR concentration than the average university.
- The data used for the university context is sourced from publicly available enrolment data.
- When applied in future iterations the Department should use the most current data available.

Resourcing

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	Financial & priority assistance

- Accommodation assistance is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
    - Do you provide accommodation assistance either financial assistance or priority accommodation to RRR students?
    - Which of the following services do you provide? – accommodation scholarships, on-, off-campus accommodation, accommodation guarantee.
        - University A answered yes, both financial and priority assistance to the first question.
        - This made them Green automatically and the provision of accommodation services to the general student population was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation guarantee	No guarantee

- Accommodation guarantee is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on a question in the pilot survey:
  - Which of the following services do you provide? – accommodation guarantee.
    - University A answered no, they do not offer an accommodation guarantee.
    - This made them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Financial assistance	RRR scholarships available

- Financial assistance is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
  - Do you have scholarships or grants specifically for RRR students?
  - Which of the following financial support services do you have available to your students? – Scholarships, grants.
    - University A answered yes to the first question.
    - This made them Green automatically and the provision of financial services to the general student population was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Emergency counselling	24hr hotline

- Emergency counselling is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Do you have a 24/7 counselling hotline or same day face to face counselling for emergency situations?
    - University A have a 24 hour hotline only.
    - This makes them Gram.
    - In order to be graded as Green they would need both services.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Counselling demand	1-2 days

- Counselling demand is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
  - On average, how long is the waiting list for students to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor?
  - Do RRR students have priority access to counsellors?
    - University A answered 1-2 days to the first question.

- This made them Green automatically and the RRR priority was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Referrals	Staff and student referrals

- Referrals is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the following question:
  - Which of the following counselling services do you have available to your students? – trained academic staff who can refer students to counselling, trained senior students who can refer students to counselling.
    - University A have both trained students and staff.
    - This makes them Green.

Sense of Belonging

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	38.7%

- Sense of belonging is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Had a sense of belonging to your university.
    - University A are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Perception of support to settle into study	54.0%

- Student perception of support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Received support from university to settle into study.
    - University A are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Orientation	All students

- Orientation is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Which of the following orientation and transition services do you have available to your students? – specific orientation programs for RRR students, various other orientation services (the question lists 11 orientation services).

- University A have 10 of the orientation services but no specific programs for RRR students.
- This makes them Gram, to be Green they need to have a specific program for RRR students.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Mentoring	No

- Mentoring is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - o Do you have a mentor/buddy system for first year students?
    - University A answered no, they do not have a mentor system for first year students.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Indigenous perspectives	[estimated]

- Indigenous perspectives is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the following question:
  - o What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?
    - University A answered that is was in the process of establishing a program for Indigenous students; and also have an existing program to motivate students to succeed; dedicated student support officers
    - Due to the future nature of some of this answer, and faculty based assistance this *estimated measure is amber.*
  - o The estimated nature of this measure is due to a change in the framework post-piloting. Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Indigenous cultural competency	[not assessed]

- Indigenous cultural competency will be derived from the self-reported survey.
- It was not assessed in the pilot due to changes in the framework post-pilot.
- Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Community outreach	RRR

- Community outreach is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - o What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?

- o Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target RRR students?
  - University A answered yes to community outreach for RRR students, but community outreach was not listed in their Indigenous services.
  - This makes them Gram.
- o There is an **estimated** element to this question because it was not explicitly asked in the self-reporting survey. Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Communication

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	Proactive calls and specialised communication

- Proactive/specialised communications is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - o How many times do you proactively telephone every first year student before the end of their first semester?
  - o How many times do you proactively email every first year student before the end of their first semester?
  - o Does your communications plan for first year students include appropriate contact with students during peak times?
    - University A answered 1 telephone call, 8 emails, and yes to appropriate communications.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of support services	62.0%

- Availability of support services is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - o Support services: available.
    - University A are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of academic support	58.5%

- Availability of academic support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - o Academic of learning advisors: available.
    - University A are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of accommodation assistance	33.3% *[not assessed]*

- Availability of accommodation assistance is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Accommodation assistance: available.
    - University A were the only university to take part in the student survey, however the response was too low to be able to score the measure.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of counselling services	33.3% *[not assessed]*

- Availability of counselling services is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Counselling services: available.
    - University A were the only university to take part in the student survey, however the response was too low to be able to score the measure.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Effectiveness

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	Detailed

- Data analytics is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?
    - University A answered: Detailed – we collect data which we can integrate with other student data so that we can analyse student cohorts who access services.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of support services	61.8%

- Helpfulness of support services is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Support services: helpful.
    - University A are less than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
    - This makes them Gram.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of academic support	61.2%

- Helpfulness of academic support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Academic or learning advisors: helpful.
    - University A are less than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Amber.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of orientation	52.9%

- Helpfulness of orientation is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful.
    - University A are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Relevance of support offered	46.6%

- Relevance of support offered is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Offered support relevant to circumstances.
    - University A are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of counselling services	33.3% *[not assessed]*

- Helpfulness of counselling services is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
    - Counselling services: helpful.
        - University A were the only university to take part in the student survey, however the response was too low to be able to score the measure.
        - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of mentoring	25.0% *[not assessed]*

- Helpfulness of mentoring is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
    - Mentoring or buddy system: helpful.
        - University A were the only university to take part in the student survey, however the response was too low to be able to score the measure.
        - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Overall the University A assessment shows that their student support services for RRR students transitioning into university are present for the most part, however, the student perception of the availability and effectiveness of these services is low.

University Name: University B

University Context

First year domestic population: Approx. 5,000 (national average = 9,717)

First year RRR population: Approx. 3,500 (national average = 2,283)

RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: Approx. 75% (national ave = 26.5%)

Campus location: Regional

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	Financial & priority assistance
	Accommodation guarantee	Yes
	Financial assistance	RRR scholarships available
	Emergency counselling	24hr hotline & face
	Counselling demand	1-2 days to face
	Referrals	Staff and student referrals
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	60.0%
	Perception of support to settle into study	73.5%
	Orientation	Has RRR orientation
	Mentoring	Yes
	Indigenous perspectives	[estimate]
	Indigenous cultural competency	[not assessed]
	Community outreach	RRR
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	Proactive calls and specialised communication
	Availability of support services	65.9%
	Availability of academic support	68.7%
	Availability of accommodation assistance	[Student survey data]
	Availability of counselling services	[Student survey data]
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	Detailed
	Helpfulness of support services	71.5%
	Helpfulness of academic support	73.8%
	Helpfulness of orientation	67.6%
	Relevance of support offered	58.4%
	Helpfulness of counselling services	[Student survey data]
	Helpfulness of mentoring	[Student survey data]

Context

> **University Name:** University B
>
> **University Context**
>
> First year domestic population: Approx. 5,000 (national average = 9,717)
>
> First year RRR population: Approx. 3,500 (national average = 2,283)
>
> RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: Approx. 75% (national ave = 26.5%)
>
> Campus location: Regional

- The contextual items demonstrate the depth of RRR students at a university while remaining succinct.
  - University B are a relatively small university due to the size of their first year population.
  - University B have a very high proportion of their first year students who are RRR students.
- The data used for the university context is sourced from publicly available enrolment data.
- When applied in future iterations the Department should use the most current data available.

Resourcing

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	Financial & priority assistance

- Accommodation assistance is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
  - Do you provide accommodation assistance either financial assistance or priority accommodation to RRR students?
  - Which of the following services do you provide? – Accommodation scholarships, on-, off-campus accommodation, accommodation guarantee.
    - University B answered yes, both financial assistance and accommodation priority to the first question.
    - This made them Green automatically and the provision of accommodation services to the general student population was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation guarantee	Yes guarantee

- Accommodation guarantee is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on a question in the pilot survey:
    - Which of the following services do you provide? – accommodation guarantee.
        - University B answered yes, they do offer an accommodation guarantee.
        - This made them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Financial assistance	RRR scholarships available

- Financial assistance is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
    - Do you have scholarships or grants specifically for RRR students?
    - Which of the following financial support services do you have available to your students? – Scholarships, grants.
        - University B answered yes to the first question.
        - This made them Green automatically and the provision of financial services to the general student population was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Emergency counselling	24hr hotline and face to face

- Emergency counselling is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
    - Do you have a 24/7 counselling hotline or same day face to face counselling for emergency situations?
        - University B have both a 24 hour hotline and same day face to face counselling.
        - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Counselling demand	1-2 days

- Counselling demand is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
    - On average, how long is the waiting list for students to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor?
    - Do RRR students have priority access to counsellors?
        - University B answered 1-2 days to the first question.
        - This made them Green automatically and the RRR priority was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Referrals	Staff and student referrals

- Referrals is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the following question:
  - Which of the following counselling services do you have available to your students? – trained academic staff who can refer students to counselling, trained senior students who can refer students to counselling.
    - University B have trained students and staff.
    - This makes them Green.

Sense of Belonging

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	60.0%

- Sense of belonging is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Had a sense of belonging to your university.
    - University B are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Perception of support to settle into study	73.5%

- Student perception of support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Received support from university to settle into study.
    - University B are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Orientation	Has RRR orientation

- Orientation is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Which of the following orientation and transition services do you have available to your students? – Specific orientation programs for RRR students, various other orientation services (the question lists 11 orientation services).
    - University B have a specific program for RRR students.
    - This made them Green automatically and the range or orientation activities available was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Mentoring	Yes

- Mentoring is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Do you have a mentor/buddy system for first year students?
    - University B answered yes, they have a mentor system for first year students.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Indigenous perspectives	[estimate]

- Indigenous perspectives is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the following question:
  - What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?
    - University B noted they have a) have specific orientation for Indigenous students b) offer tuition support c) Students are supported to apply for Commonwealth scholarships d) Aboriginal liaison officers work with students to develop a learning plan from which pastoral and learning support needs are determined.
    - Due to the wide range of services available to Indigenous students this *estimated measure is green.*
  - The estimated nature of this measure is due to a change in the framework post-piloting. Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Indigenous cultural competency	[not assessed]

- Indigenous cultural competency will be derived from the self-reported survey.
- It was not assessed in the pilot due to changes in the framework post-pilot.
- Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Community outreach	RRR

- Community outreach is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?
  - Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target RRR students?
    - University B answered yes to community outreach for RRR students, but did not mention outreach in their Indigenous services.
    - This makes them Gram.

o   There is an **estimated** element to this question because it was not explicitly asked in the self-reporting survey. Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Communication

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	Proactive calls and specialised communication

- Proactive/specialised communications is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
    - How many times do you proactively telephone every first year student before the end of their first semester?
    - How many times do you proactively email every first year student before the end of their first semester?
    - Does your communications plan for first year students include appropriate contact with students during peak times?
        - University B answered 5 telephone calls, 7 emails, and yes to appropriate communications.
        - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of support services	65.9%

- Availability of support services is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
    - Support services: available.
        - University B are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
        - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of academic support	68.9%

- Availability of academic support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
    - Academic of learning advisors: available.
        - University B are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
        - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of accommodation assistance	*[Student survey data]*

- Availability of accommodation assistance is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Accommodation assistance: available.
    - University B did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of counselling services	*[Student survey data]*

- Availability of counselling services is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Counselling services: available.
    - University B did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Effectiveness

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	Detailed

- Data analytics is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?
    - University B answered: Detailed – we collect data which we can integrate with other student data so that we can analyse student cohorts who access services.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of support services	71.5%

- Helpfulness of support services is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Support services: helpful.
    - University B are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of academic support	71.5%

- Helpfulness of academic support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
    - Academic or learning advisors: helpful.
        - University B are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
        - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of orientation	67.6%

- Helpfulness of orientation is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
    - Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful.
        - University B are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
        - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Relevance of support offered	58.4%

- Relevance of support offered is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
    - Offered support relevant to circumstances.
        - University B are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
        - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of counselling services	*[Student survey data]*

- Helpfulness of counselling services is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
    - Counselling services: helpful.
        - University B did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
        - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of mentoring	*[Student survey data]*

- Helpfulness of mentoring is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Mentoring or buddy system: helpful.
    - University B did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Overall the University B assessment shows that their student support services for RRR students transitioning into university are present in all areas. The student perception of the availability and effectiveness of these services is also high in all areas.

University C

University Name: University C

University Context

First year domestic population: Approx. 10,000 (national average = 9,717)

First year RRR population: Approx. 500 (national average = 2,283)

RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: Approx. 5% (national ave = 26.5%)

Campus location: Metropolitan

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	Financial assistance
	Accommodation guarantee	No
	Financial assistance	RRR scholarships available
	Emergency counselling	No hotline or face to face
	Counselling demand	3-4 weeks
	Referrals	Staff and student referrals
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	48.1%
	Perception of support to settle into study	59.2%
	Orientation	All students
	Mentoring	Yes
	Indigenous perspectives	[estimate]
	Indigenous cultural competency	[not assessed]
	Community outreach	RRR and Indigenous
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	Proactive calls and specialised communication
	Availability of support services	67.2%
	Availability of academic support	56.3%
	Availability of accommodation assistance	[Student survey data]
	Availability of counselling services	[Student survey data]
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	Intermediate
	Helpfulness of support services	68.4%
	Helpfulness of academic support	53.1%
	Helpfulness of orientation	53.8%
	Relevance of support offered	53.9%
	Helpfulness of counselling services	[Student survey data]
	Helpfulness of mentoring	[Student survey data]

Context

University Name: University C

University Context

First year domestic population: Approx. 10,000 (national average = 9,717)

First year RRR population: Approx. 500 (national average = 2,283)

RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: Approx. 5% (national ave = 26.5%)

Campus location: Metropolitan

- The contextual items demonstrate the depth of RRR students at a university while remaining succinct.
    - When compared to the national average University C are a relatively average-sized university due to the size of their population.
    - University C have a low proportion of their first year students who are RRR students.
- The data used for the university context is sourced from publicly available enrolment data.
- When applied in future iterations the Department should use the most current data available.

Resourcing

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	Financial assistance

- Accommodation assistance is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
    - Do you provide accommodation assistance either financial assistance or priority accommodation to RRR students?
    - Which of the following services do you provide? – Accommodation scholarships, on-, off-campus accommodation, accommodation guarantee.
        - University C answered yes, financial assistance to the first question.
        - This made them Green automatically and the provision of accommodation services to the general student population was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation guarantee	No guarantee

- Accommodation guarantee is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on a question in the pilot survey:
  - Which of the following services do you provide? – accommodation guarantee.
    - University C answered no, they do not offer an accommodation guarantee.
    - This made them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Financial assistance	RRR scholarships available

- Financial assistance is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
  - Do you have scholarships or grants specifically for RRR students?
  - Which of the following financial support services do you have available to your students? – Scholarships, grants.
    - University C answered yes to the first question.
    - This made them Green automatically and the provision of financial services to the general student population was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Emergency counselling	No hotline or face to face

- Emergency counselling is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Do you have a 24/7 counselling hotline or same day face to face counselling for emergency situations?
    - University C have neither a 24 hour hotline nor same day face to face counselling.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Counselling demand	3-4 weeks

- Counselling demand is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
  - On average, how long is the waiting list for students to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor?
  - Do RRR students have priority access to counsellors?
    - University C answered 3-4 weeks to the first question.
    - This made them Red automatically and the RRR priority was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Referrals	Staff and student referrals

- Referrals is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the following question:
  - Which of the following counselling services do you have available to your students? – trained academic staff who can refer students to counselling, trained senior students who can refer students to counselling.
    - University C have trained students and staff.
    - This makes them Green.

Sense of Belonging

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	48.1%

- Sense of belonging is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Had a sense of belonging to your university.
    - University C are less than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Amber.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Perception of support to settle into study	59.2%

- Student perception of support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Received support from university to settle into study.
    - University C are less than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Amber.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Orientation	All students

- Orientation is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Which of the following orientation and transition services do you have available to your students? – Specific orientation programs for RRR students, various other orientation services (the question lists 11 orientation services).
    - University C have 11 of the orientation services but no specific programs for RRR students.
    - This makes them Gram.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Mentoring	Yes

- Mentoring is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Do you have a mentor/buddy system for first year students?
    - University C answered yes, they have a mentor system for first year students.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Indigenous perspectives	*[estimate]*

- Indigenous perspectives is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the following question:
  - What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?
    - University C indicated it ensures that no Indigenous student has to pay for their student accommodation, and that they have Indigenous program resources, food, tutoring, student services, subsidised international study
    - Due to the wide range of services available to Indigenous students this *estimated measure is green.*
  - The estimated nature of this measure is due to a change in the framework post-piloting. Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Indigenous cultural competency	*[not assessed]*

- Indigenous cultural competency will be derived from the self-reported survey.
- It was not assessed in the pilot due to changes in the framework post-pilot.
- Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Community outreach	RRR and Indigenous

- Community outreach is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?
  - Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target RRR students?
    - University C answered yes to community outreach for RRR students, and community outreach was listed in their Indigenous services.
    - This makes them Green.

- o There is an **estimated** element to this question because it was not explicitly asked in the self-reporting survey. Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Communication

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	Proactive calls and specialised communication

- Proactive/specialised communications is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - o How many times do you proactively telephone every first year student before the end of their first semester?
  - o How many times do you proactively email every first year student before the end of their first semester?
  - o Does your communications plan for first year students include appropriate contact with students during peak times?
    - University C answered 2 telephone calls, 5 emails, and yes to appropriate communications.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of support services	67.2%

- Availability of support services is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - o Support services: available.
    - University C are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of academic support	56.3%

- Availability of academic support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - o Academic of learning advisors: available.
    - University C are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of accommodation assistance	*[Student survey data]*

- Availability of accommodation assistance is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - o Accommodation assistance: available.
    - ▪ University C did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - ▪ This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of counselling services	*[Student survey data]*

- Availability of counselling services is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - o Counselling services: available.
    - ▪ University C did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - ▪ This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Effectiveness

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	Intermediate

- Data analytics is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - o What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?
    - ▪ University C answered: Intermediate – we collect information about number of visits and basic demographics for each service.
    - ▪ This makes them Gram.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of support services	68.4%

- Helpfulness of support services is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - o Support services: helpful.
    - ▪ University C are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
    - ▪ This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of academic support	53.1%

- Helpfulness of academic support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Academic or learning advisors: helpful.
    - University C are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of orientation	53.8%

- Helpfulness of orientation is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful.
    - University C are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Relevance of support offered	53.9%

- Relevance of support offered is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Offered support relevant to circumstances.
    - University C are less than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) above the national average.
    - This makes them Gram.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of counselling services	*[Student survey data]*

- Helpfulness of counselling services is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Counselling services: helpful.
    - University C did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of mentoring	*[Student survey data]*

- Helpfulness of mentoring is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Mentoring or buddy system: helpful.
    - University C did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Overall the University C assessment shows that their student support services for RRR students transitioning into university are present for the most part but are below standard for counselling services. The student perception of the availability and effectiveness of these services is varied with some low and some high.

University D

University Name: University D

University Context

First year domestic population: Approx. 14,000 (national average = 9,717)

First year RRR population: Approx. 1,000 (national average = 2,283)

RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: Approx. 8% (national ave = 26.5%)

Campus location: Metropolitan

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	Financial assistance
	Accommodation guarantee	Yes
	Financial assistance	RRR scholarships available
	Emergency counselling	24hr hotline & face to face
	Counselling demand	3-6 days
	Referrals	Trained students
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	40.3%
	Perception of support to settle into study	51.0%
	Orientation	Has RRR orientation
	Mentoring	Yes
	Indigenous perspectives	[estimate]
	Indigenous cultural competency	[not assessed]
	Community outreach	RRR and Indigenous
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	Proactive emails and specialised communication
	Availability of support services	48.1%
	Availability of academic support	52.8%
	Availability of accommodation assistance	[Student survey data]
	Availability of counselling services	[Student survey data]
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	Intermediate
	Helpfulness of support services	53.4%
	Helpfulness of academic support	60.8%
	Helpfulness of orientation	55.3%
	Relevance of support offered	40.1%
	Helpfulness of counselling services	[Student survey data]
	Helpfulness of mentoring	[Student survey data]

Context

> **University Name:** University D
>
> **University Context**
>
> First year domestic population: Approx. 14,000 (national average = 9,717)
>
> First year RRR population: Approx. 1,000 (national average = 2,283)
>
> RRR as a proportion of first year domestic population: Approx. 8% (national ave = 26.5%)
>
> Campus location: Metropolitan

- The contextual items demonstrate the depth of RRR students at a university while remaining succinct.
  - University D are a relatively large university due to the size of their population.
  - University D have a low proportion of their first year students who are RRR students.
- The data used for the university context is sourced from publicly available enrolment data.
- When applied in future iterations the Department should use the most current data available.

Resourcing

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation assistance	Financial assistance

- Accommodation assistance is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
  - Do you provide accommodation assistance either financial assistance or priority accommodation to RRR students?
  - Which of the following services do you provide? – Accommodation scholarships, on-, off-campus accommodation, accommodation guarantee.
    - University D answered yes, financial assistance to the first question.
    - This made them Green automatically and the provision of accommodation services to the general student population was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Accommodation guarantee	Yes guarantee

- Accommodation guarantee is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on a question in the pilot survey:
    - Which of the following services do you provide? – accommodation guarantee.
        - University D answered yes, they do offer an accommodation guarantee.
        - This made them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Financial assistance	RRR scholarships available

- Financial assistance is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
    - Do you have scholarships or grants specifically for RRR students?
    - Which of the following financial support services do you have available to your students? – Scholarships, grants.
        - University D answered yes to the first question.
        - This made them Green automatically and the provision of financial services to the general student population was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Emergency counselling	24hr hotline & face to face

- Emergency counselling is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
    - Do you have a 24/7 counselling hotline or same day face to face counselling for emergency situations?
        - University D have a 24 hour hotline and same day face to face counselling.
        - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Counselling demand	3-6 days

- Counselling demand is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on two questions in the pilot survey:
    - On average, how long is the waiting list for students to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor?
    - Do RRR students have priority access to counsellors?
        - University D answered 3-6 days to the first question.
        - This made them Green automatically and the RRR priority was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Resourcing	Referrals	Trained students

- Referrals is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the following question:
  - Which of the following counselling services do you have available to your students? – trained academic staff who can refer students to counselling, trained senior students who can refer students to counselling.
    - University D have trained students but no trained staff.
    - This makes them Gram, to be Green they would need to have trained academic staff who can refer students.

Sense of Belonging

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Sense of belonging	40.3%

- Sense of belonging is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Had a sense of belonging to your university.
    - University D are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Perception of support to settle into study	51.0%

- Student perception of support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Received support from university to settle into study.
    - University D are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Orientation	Has RRR orientation

- Orientation is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Which of the following orientation and transition services do you have available to your students? – Specific orientation programs for RRR students, various other orientation services (the question lists 11 orientation services).
    - University D have a specific program for RRR students.
    - This made them Green automatically and the range or orientation activities available was not required to make a judgement.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Mentoring	Yes

- Mentoring is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the question:
  - Do you have a mentor/buddy system for first year students?
    - University D answered yes, they have a mentor system for first year students.
    - This makes them Green.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Indigenous perspectives	[estimate]

- Indigenous perspectives is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the following question:
  - What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?
    - University D noted their comprehensive outreach and engagement program, that supports students in making informed choices about their degree preferences, orientation academic skills programs, individual and group tutoring, accommodation scholarships, commencing student financial aid, senior student leadership and mentoring program, cultural activities and engagement, and belonging programs.
    - Due to the wide range of services available to Indigenous students and broad scope of outreach this *estimated measure is green.*
  - The estimated nature of this measure is due to a change in the framework post-piloting. Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Indigenous cultural competency	[not assessed]

- Indigenous cultural competency will be derived from the self-reported survey.
- It was not assessed in the pilot due to changes in the framework post-pilot.
- Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Sense of Belonging	Community outreach	RRR and Indigenous

- Community outreach is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?

- o Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target RRR students?
  - University D answered yes to community outreach for RRR students, and a comprehensive community outreach program was described in their Indigenous services.
  - This makes them Green.
- o There is an **estimated** element to this question because it was not explicitly asked in the self-reporting survey. Future iterations of the assessment will adequately assess this measure.

Communication

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Proactive/specialised communications	Proactive emails and specialised communication

- Proactive/specialised communications is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - o How many times do you proactively telephone every first year student before the end of their first semester?
  - o How many times do you proactively email every first year student before the end of their first semester?
  - o Does your communications plan for first year students include appropriate contact with students during peak times?
    - University D answered 0 telephone calls, 3 emails, and yes to appropriate communications.
    - This makes them Gram. To be Green they would need at least 1 proactive telephone call to students.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of support services	48.1%

- Availability of support services is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - o Support services: available.
    - University D are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of academic support	52.8%

- Availability of academic support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Academic of learning advisors: available.
    - University D are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of accommodation assistance	*[Student survey data]*

- Availability of accommodation assistance is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Accommodation assistance: available.
    - University D did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Communication	Availability of counselling services	*[Student survey data]*

- Availability of counselling services is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Counselling services: available.
    - University D did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Effectiveness

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Monitoring usage of services	Intermediate

- Data analytics is derived from the self-reported survey.
- For the pilot it was based on the questions:
  - What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?
    - University D answered: Intermediate – we collect information about number of visits and basic demographics for each service.
    - This makes them Gram.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of support services	53.4%

- Helpfulness of support services is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Support services: helpful.
    - University D are less than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Amber.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of academic support	60.8%

- Helpfulness of academic support is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Academic or learning advisors: helpful.
    - University D are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of orientation	55.3%

- Helpfulness of orientation is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Induction/orientation activities relevant and helpful.
    - University D are less than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Amber.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Relevance of support offered	40.1%

- Relevance of support offered is derived from the Student Experience Survey data.
- It is based on the item:
  - Offered support relevant to circumstances.
    - University D are more than one standard deviation (5 percentage points) below the national average.
    - This makes them Red.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of counselling services	*[Student survey data]*

- Helpfulness of counselling services is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Counselling services: helpful.

- University D did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
- This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Element	Indicator	Assessment
Effectiveness	Helpfulness of mentoring	*[Student survey data]*

- Helpfulness of mentoring is derived from the student survey.
- It is based on the item:
  - Mentoring or buddy system: helpful.
    - University D did not take part in the student survey as only one university was used as the pilot and hence have no data.
    - This survey item is based on the Student Experience Survey model of collection and future iterations of the survey will adequately assess this measure.

Overall the University D assessment shows that their student support services for RRR students transitioning into university are present for the most part, however, the student perception of the availability and effectiveness of these services is low.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project has developed and piloted a Framework for an annual assessment of the support services that Table A universities provide to support the transition of RRR students into university. It was commissioned by the Department of Education and Training to support the Australian Government's response to the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education*, led by Emeritus Professor John Halsey (the Halsey Review). The outcomes of this project will provide the Australian Government with a better understanding of the needs of, and support for, this cohort of students.

The project has designed and validated a Framework with the use of pilot data collected from most Australian Table A universities. The Framework has been designed to be easily administered periodically as a self-assessment for universities.

The Framework has been developed and refined based on literature and stakeholder consultation. The elements, indicators and measures defined are relevant to RRR students transitioning to university. RRR students have some differing needs to the general student population and how well a university caters to those academic and non-academic needs can mean different things. When a university's core business is RRR students, for example regional universities, they are likely to cater to those needs as a matter of course. Metropolitan universities with smaller RRR cohorts may be familiar with the RRR needs, however they may not prioritise those needs ahead of the needs of their core students.

This assessment is designed to show where these differences exist so that:

- current and potential students understand where RRR students are well catered for
- universities may use the data to see areas which are working well and where there is a need to improve in their services for RRR students
- the Australian Government can see where differences in RRR services are occurring.

The **development** of the Framework considered all student services and equity groups, since RRR students are often part of other equity groups. A large proportion of Indigenous students are from an RRR background, and RRR students also have comparatively high numbers of low-SES students, students with a disability, and/or students that are first in their family to study at university.

The Framework developed draws on four key elements, each of which have a number of indicators for which to assess provision of services. The assessment of services relies on a number of data collection points:

- a self-reporting survey of universities, designed and piloted in this project
- extracted data from the Student Experience Survey, along with four new items developed and piloted in this project
- administrative data, collected by the Department.

The ongoing use of the Framework by the Department is dependent on the accurate collection of data from universities, as well as the ongoing data collection from the Student Experience Survey.

The Framework offers a consistent measure of a university's support services for RRR students transitioning to university against a benchmark level. It is not intended to compare universities to each other because the context of each university is different. Changes to a university's measures over time will be a valid indicator of changes to their support services.

The Student Experience Survey-based measures will have a moving benchmark, because they are based on the given year's mean for each item. These Student Experience Survey benchmarks will require calculation before a new year of data is applied to the Framework.

The self-reporting university survey should be sent annually to all universities at the same time. Some consideration may need to be given to the point in time which it is delivered and whether answers from the survey may change dependent on the time in the individual university's calendar (for example, census dates, exam times).

The self-reporting survey has been refined through the pilot so the impact on university staff will be minimal and the required data will be collected as efficiently as possible. The recommended final questions can be found in Appendix H. These questions are designed to make the Framework easy to administer once the data sources are consolidated.

There were four areas on which the Student Experience Survey does not collect data which are relevant to this project for RRR students transitioning. Therefore, it is recommended that four items be added to the Student Experience Survey for annual data collection. The questions, which ACER have designed using the same survey format as the Student Experience Survey, can be asked only of first year RRR students so there is minimal survey load placed on the general population of the Student Experience Survey.

A full summary of the data variables required to complete the assessment can be found in Appendix G.

The **pilot** data collection is a fair representation of the presented universities, however, there are several caveats which should be considered when reviewing the results

- The student survey measures which are not already a part of the Student Experience Survey were only collected for one university. The data collection was too small to make any reasonable assessments, therefore these four measures should not be considered and have been omitted from the pilot assessment.
- The *Sense of belonging* measures which refer to Indigenous issues were developed after the pilot data was collected. One measure has been estimated from known data, however these measures should be treated in the pilot as indicative only because explicit data to complete these measures were not collected.
- The *Communications* measure, 'Proactive/specialised communications', uses a question which asks about the number of telephone communications. For the pilot survey there was a 'don't know' option for this question. If a university said 'don't know', these data were treated as none. Therefore, some universities may have been assessed as not telephoning students, when they may have.
- In the university self-reporting survey, universities were asked a 'yes/no' question about whether they had mentors for first year students. Following the pilot, the

measure has been amended to include a training aspect. The pilot survey did not capture the training aspect, therefore if a university said 'yes they have mentors' they were assessed to have trained mentors.

Overall the pilot assessment was a success. Most (33 of 38) universities were able to provide the required data so that the Framework could be successfully tested. The pilot data collection assisted the researchers when deciding on the design of some measures. An example of this was the measure that was abandoned regarding the percentage of RRR students who were receiving accommodation assistance. Eighty-three per cent of universities were unable to answer this question in the pilot therefore the measure was not suitable for an assessment of all universities.

When reviewing all universities and their results in the assessment it can broadly be seen that regional universities, where RRR students are the core business of the university have fewer areas to improve on in their student service provision for transitioning RRR students than their metropolitan counterparts.

A weakness of the Framework may be perceived regarding the nuance around accommodation and financial assistance. These forms of student assistance, at many universities, are awarded to students using complex matrices of factors. Students from RRR areas may be included in these calculations, however, other factors which go into those decisions do not make the decision as straightforward as 'RRR students get accommodation assistance'. The measures put forward in the Framework, therefore, are simplified.

While the Framework presents a thorough coverage of the issues identified through widespread consultation during the project, it is suggested that a further round of consultation within the sector using the piloted Framework would be useful for validation before the assessment Framework is applied and published.

It is hoped that the outcomes of this development and pilot can be usefully implemented into an ongoing assessment of support services for RRR students that leads to improvement of transition experiences for the cohort.

The following recommendations concern the implementation of the assessment.

Recommendation 1: The Framework developed for the pilot should be reviewed by stakeholders and the sector to ensure transparency and to foster stakeholder co-operation.

Recommendation 2: Future application of the Framework should be implemented in conjunction with current data for consistent, accurate measures. The Framework can be found in Table 2.

Recommendation 3: The annual university self-reporting survey developed in this project is sent to universities to collect data for the assessment. The required questions to collect appropriate data can be found in Appendix H.

Recommendation 4: Four items be added to the Student Experience Survey, to improve the data collected in the assessment. These questions can be found on page 38 of this report.

Recommendation 5: The Department consider the most appropriate method of disseminating the results of future applications of the Framework (i.e. online platforms etc).

Appendix A: Introduction email from the Department

For Official Use Only

Dear Vice-Chancellor

Projects to support the Australian Government's response to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education, led by Emeritus Professor John Halsey (the Halsey Review)

On the 30 May 2018, the Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, wrote to you about the Government response to the Halsey Review.

The Minister indicated he had directed the Department of Education and Training to assess the support that universities offer regional, rural and remote students on transition to university. The Department has formulated two projects in response.

The Department has engaged KPMG, led by Professor Stephen Parker AO, to deliver the *Assessment of tertiary education dual sector delivery activity and opportunities* consultancy project. This project will provide the Australian Government with an updated evidence base on partnerships, co-location, and sharing of facilities between Table A universities with regional campuses and public vocational education and training providers, including TAFEs. It will also produce recommendations on potential opportunities for expansion of service delivery.

The Department has also engaged the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), led by Dr Daniel Edwards, to deliver the *Assessment of university support services for regional and remote students on transition to university* consultancy project. This project will develop and pilot a framework for an annual assessment of the support services Table A universities provide to support the transition of regional and remote students into university. The outcomes of this project will provide the Australian Government with a better understanding of the needs of and support for this cohort of students, and will be made publicly available through the Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) website.

I anticipate that both projects will be complete by the end of July 2018. To assist us to meet this tight deadline, I would like to request your university's cooperation with KPMG and ACER during the stakeholder consultation phase in late June/early July.

If you have any questions about these projects, please contact Amanda Franzi, Director Equity Policy, on 02 6240 2693 or at amanda.franzi@education.gov.au.

I look forward to working with your university on these important projects.

Regards,

Robert Latta.

Branch Manager
Governance, Quality and Access Branch
Higher Education Group
Australian Government Department of Education and Training

Appendix B: Letter of introduction from ACER

Dear <DVC>,

Recently the Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Group has been in contact with your Vice-Chancellor about a research project which the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) have been commissioned to conduct.

The project is in response to the Halsey Review which indicated that an assessment of university support services for regional, rural and remote (RRR) students be developed to assist with ongoing feedback on RRR student transition into university.

In order to develop a pilot for the project: *Assessment of university support services for regional and remote students on transition to university*, ACER will be conducting stakeholder interviews through June and early July 2018, as well as conducting a survey of RRR students to gain insight into their use of provided services.

We have copied into this email support services contact/s from your university who we plan to connect with in the next week in relation to this important project.

If you have any questions regarding this project or would like to suggest an alternative contact within your university, please contact the project team at ACER: Darren Matthews on 03 9277 5227 or at darren.matthews@acer.org, or Gina Milgate on 03 9277 5417 or at gina.milgate@acer.org.

Regards,

Dr Daniel Edwards

[cc. Student Support Services key personnel]

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Appendix C: Literature Review

Assessment of university support services for regional and remote students on transition to university.

Review of Policy and Literature

Access without effective support is not opportunity (Tinto, 2008)

Executive Summary

Student support services in universities have been established to support students in their transition to, and throughout, their university lives. Providing support services that meet the needs of students on their transition to university helps to facilitate student retention. Regional, rural and remote (RRR) students may have differing needs and expectations from their urban peers which need to be supported to ensure a smooth and positive transition experience.

Support services at universities provide students with a range of advice and support about accommodation services, orientation and transition services, Indigenous student support, financial support, welfare and counselling, health, and in other relevant areas of student need. Despite efforts by universities to make these services available for students, not all students may be aware of their existence or access these services in their transition to university. Furthermore, the increase and breadth of student diversity in terms of backgrounds, abilities, and expectations (Macdonald, 2000) attending university demands deeper understanding about how support services are meeting these diverse needs.

This literature review focuses on university support services to RRR students on transition to university. For the purposes of this review, RRR students are defined as students with a permanent address in one of the regional or remote areas under the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). The review seeks to understand the extent and type of support services which are provided to RRR students, the contextual challenges faced by RRR students transitioning to university, and the context, and potential differences, around Indigenous students transitioning to university from RRR areas.

Methodology

Academic literature was obtained via ACER Cunningham Library's subscriptions to multiple online databases, including (but not limited to) educational databases such as Informit Databases, A+ Education, EBSCOhost databases, PsycINFO and Learning Ground - Australian Indigenous Research Database. Grey literature was also sourced from education books and articles.

In addition, the websites of all Table A universities were analysed to identify policy and support services relevant to RRR student transition to university. Information from each site was compiled into a matrix to assist in analysis and identification of themes and coverage of support (see Appendix D).

Discussion and Findings

The Australian Government and universities have a shared commitment to increasing participation of under-represented groups in universities. As part of this commitment, universities have invested in support services that aim to meet the specific needs of students that are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, students from low socio economicbackgrounds, students from regional, rural or remote areas, and students with disabilities (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).

The retention rates for the 2006-2014 student cohort showed an overall completion rate of 73.5 per cent, compared to lower rates of completion for regional (69.0 per cent) and remote (60.1 per cent) students (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, 2017). Student retention and completion is impacted by how well universities target and communicate their support services (Australian Government, 2017, p.7). Furthermore, universities that identify the support required for first year students early, have a better chance of retaining those students. Scott's (2005) investigation of 95,000 graduates from Australian universities highlighted the importance and significance of improving student administration and support for students. The graduates from this study emphasised that "the total university experience shapes students' retention" (p. 79).

For students entering university for the first time, the experience and transition "can be an exciting challenge and a daunting proposition" (Perry & Allard, 2003, p.74). The support students receive during their transition to university can influence their sense of belonging and connection (Perry & Allard, 2003), as well as their academic and social experiences. For RRR students, their transition experience can generate needs and support that may differ from their urban peers. Despite efforts by universities to make these services available for these students, not all students may be aware of or access these services in their transition to university. Furthermore, students transitioning to university from regional, rural, and remote parts of Australia are often presented with unique challenges in their transition to and through their first year of university.

Universities provide information about their support services for students on their websites and through other outreach activities such as visiting schools and direct mail. A desktop analysis of Table A universities in Australia sought to understand the information about support services that are promoted by universities for students transitioning to university.

The contextual challenges faced by RRR students transitioning to university

The initial experiences by RRR students in their transition to university are likely to have an influence on the journey through their university education and experience. Much evidence suggests that if universities retain students after their first year, those students are more likely to complete their degrees. Kift (2008) stresses that the capacity for universities to invite participation from diverse cohorts, such as RRR students, is strongly correlated with the environment which the university establishes to enable a successful transition to second year.

Students from RRR locations may offer needs and face challenges in their transition to university which differ from their urban peers. The prospect of relocating, living in high cost

localities, moving away from family, and feeling a sense of belonging are important considerations for universities in supporting RRR students. Furthermore, students who are first-in-family (FiF) to attend university are most likely to come from a rural background (Scevak, Southgate, Rubin, Macqueen, Douglas, and Williams, 2015). In their study about making connections and the transition experience, Perry and Allard (2003) identified at the basic level of anxiety for new students was navigating the transition "experience of coming to and belonging in" (p. 80) a university community. Likewise, McKenzie and Egea's (2016) First Year Experience Program Strategy Framework emphasises that student's sense of identity and belonging should be at the core of a first year experience to enable effective transition and engagement.

The extent and type of support services which are provided to RRR students

Analysis of Australian Table A university websites emphasised the breadth and depth of support that universities promote and have available for students, in particular for students commencing university for the first time. The scan used six key terms relating to support services including accommodation services, orientation and transition services, Indigenous support services, financial support, welfare/counselling, and health. Where supplementary information was identified it was categorised as 'other' in a seventh category. Despite a range of support services offered and promoted by universities on their public websites, the extent and type of support services which are promoted specifically for RRR students is sparse.

All universities promoted information about accommodation for new students including on-campus options and how to apply and links to off-campus options. Additionally, some universities promoted links to external information such as realestate.com and Domain. There were a range of resources that universities promoted about orientation and transition for new students like campus tours, orientation online, information sessions for parents and partners, welcome videos, o-week, balancing life and university, course advice, study skills, and information guides. All universities promoted some form of support services for Indigenous students namely Indigenous support units, transition support, tutorial assistance, Indigenous scholarships, pathways, community events, subject selection, mentoring, financial support, accommodation, and culturally safe spaces.

There were two types of financial support services that universities promoted. These were financial assistance (e.g.: scholarships, bursaries, loans, travel concessions) and financial advice (e.g.: budgeting, avoiding and dealing with debt, estimating expenses, saving strategies). Whilst most universities offered information about financial assistance, La Trobe University promoted "travel bursaries for regional students on a low income". All universities promoted a form of counselling or welfare support service, namely types of counselling, mental health support, wellbeing events, online resources, mindfulness, self-help resources, Indigenous counselling, e-counselling, and ways to seek help.

Overall the types of services promoted on university websites could be categorised as 'services' (active participation with students) or 'advice' (static webpages or links to external providers). This distinction between services and advice is important when monitoring the success of programs in retaining students.

The context, and potential differences, around Indigenous students transitioning to university from RRR areas.

The early experiences for Indigenous students at university are likely to have an effect on their success at university. Indigenous students have lower rates of completion at university than their non-Indigenous peers. From 2010 to 2015 40.5 per cent of Indigenous students completed a course compared to 66.4 per cent of non-Indigenous students. Furthermore, 18.6 per cent of Indigenous students left after year 1 and didn't return compared to 7.7 per cent of non-Indigenous (Australian Government, 2017).

Indigenous students from RRR locations offer further unique needs for university support services. The review of higher education access and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, and Kelly, 2012) emphasised challenges that regularly face Indigenous students in their transition to university including the university environment, and "access to housing and pastoral care" (p.59). Furthermore, costs, not only financially, of relocating and leaving family, community, and place are contexts which universities need to genuinely acknowledge and continuously support for Indigenous students. As Indigenous students are smaller in population in comparison to their non-Indigenous peers, Behrendt et al (2012) suggest this is an opportunity for universities to offer one-to-one support that is underpinned by cultural competence.

Universities across Australia have implemented a range of strategies to increase Indigenous retention including establishing Indigenous support units, Indigenous scholarships, financial support, academic mentoring and tutoring, travel assistance, IT support, pathway programs, orientation programs, culturally safe places, accommodation support, enrolment and subject selection support. Whilst these types of support services and advice are well intended, they often operate in a silo or the Indigenous education support unit carries the weight of them. Behrendt et al (2012) highlighted the need for a whole of university approach where all stakeholders have a shared responsibility to support the cultural and academic needs of Indigenous students.

In Summary

Universities in Australia have a commitment to providing support services that meet the needs of RRR students. Whilst information about university support services are promoted on university websites and through other dissemination channels, students from RRR backgrounds may not be aware of this information or that they can access this support. A scan of the Table A university websites yielded broad and deep insights about student support services, notably, accommodation, scholarships, finance, counselling, welfare, health, and Indigenous support.

RRR students will very often be from other equity groups, whether that is first in family, low-SES or an Indigenous background, therefore universities have a duty of care to each of these areas which often overlap.

Furthermore, preliminary interviews with stakeholders emphasised these supports, but also highlighted the challenge of recognising the support students require from acceptance of a

place at university, to their first day on campus and beyond. The issues of leaving home, isolation, loneliness, and belonging are emerging themes from stakeholders.

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Appendix D: Website Review (unpublished)

Appendix E: Stakeholder Interview Question Guide

Interview script/questions

How do you focus support services in general, what are the 'hot button' topics for your university at the moment?

- Are there any services particularly for RRR students?

Do individual faculties have orientation and transition services independent of university support services? And how do they support RRR students?

How do you approach specific support services for those transitioning to university from a regional or remote areas?

How do you promote support services? Emails, self-service, flyers etc?

Specific areas for RRR and transitioning students:

- Accommodation
    - Do colleges/residences have transition programs for their residents?
- Transition
    - Services vs advice
- Indigenous support
- Financial support
    - Are there bursaries or extra financial assistance for RRR
- Counselling
- Health and welfare

Equity areas with their own specialist services? International, LGBTIQ, Indigenous, disability, first in family, low SES etc.

Do you have any data on support service usage?

Appendix F: Online Self-Reporting University Survey – Pilot Data Collection

University Support Services: Stakeholder Consultation

Recently the Department of Education and Training contacted your university to inform you of a research project which the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) have been commissioned to conduct.

The project is in response to the Halsey Review which indicated that an assessment of university support services for regional, rural and remote (RRR) students be developed to assist with ongoing feedback on RRR student transition into university.

As part of the stakeholder consultation connected with the development of a pilot framework for the assessment of student services for regional, remote and rural students of their transition to university, we invite you to complete a short survey regarding the services available at your university.

The survey will take between 5 and 10 minutes to complete and will assist ACER to make informed decisions regarding the availability and use of support services.

If you are not the correct person to be able to answer all of the questions, please forward to the correct contact. You are able to save the survey and continue later so you can send the survey in a chain to as many contacts as you need, however you only have one link per university, so don't forward to multiple people at once or you will over write each other's answers.

There are 26 questions in this survey

Thinking about all students at your university.

Which of the following Orientation and Transition Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Study skills/Academic sessions
- Library orientation
- Social events
- Mentoring/buddy system
- Help enrolling and timetabling
- Orientation packs
- Information on connecting with services
- Pathway programs
- Campus tours
- Accommodation services
- Accommodation advice
- Specific orientation programs for regional, rural and remote students
- Other:

Which of the following Accommodation Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- On-campus residences
- University affiliated accommodation (off campus)
- Colleges
- Accommodation scholarships
- Accommodation guarantee
- Other:

Which of the following Financial Support Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Scholarships
- Bursaries or Grants
- Textbook vouchers
- Student loans
- Student concessions and discounts
- Financial counsellors and advice
- Online resources – Centrelink advice, budgeting, tax returns, etc.

Which of the following Counselling Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- On campus counsellors
- Online, university counsellors
- 24/7 hotline assistance
- Sexual assault & family violence services
- Advice/resources available online
- Trained academic staff who can refer students to counselling
- Trained senior students who can refer students to counselling

Which of the following Welfare Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Student advocacy
- Legal aid
- Wellbeing advice (e.g. mental health advice, dietary advice, living away from home advice)
- Clubs and societies
- Safe spaces for equity groups (e.g. LGBTIQ students, prayer rooms)
- Referrals
- Wellbeing guidelines

Which of the following Health Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- On campus GP clinic
- Referrals
- Sexual health nurse
- Free vaccinations
- On campus pharmacy
- Nutrition/dietician
- Other Medical specialists (e.g. Optometrist, Dentist, Chiropractor)

Which of the following Careers Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Careers advisors
- Online careers advice

Which of the following Religious Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Chaplaincy
- Prayer rooms
- Spiritual guidance

How many times do you proactively telephone every first year student before the end of their first semester? If you don't know put 99.

Only numbers may be entered in this field.
Your answer must be at most 99

Please write your answer here:

How many times do you proactively email every first year students before the end of their first semester? If you don't know put 99.

Only numbers may be entered in this field.
Your answer must be at most 99

Please write your answer here:
Does your communications plan for first year students include appropriate contact with students during peak times? (e.g. mental health advice before exam periods)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

Do you have a 24/7 counselling hotline or same day face to face counselling for emergency situations?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes, a 24 hour hotline
- Yes, same day face to face counselling
- Yes, both a 24 hour hotline and same day face to face counselling
- No, neither a 24 hour hotline nor same day face to face counselling

On average, how long is the waiting list for students to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was at question '5 [Counselling]' (Which of the following Counselling Services do you have available to your students?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Within 24 hours
- 1 to 2 days
- 3 to 6 days
- 1 to 2 weeks
- 3 to 4 weeks
- Longer than 4 weeks

Do any cohorts of students have priority access to counsellors?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was at question '5 [Counselling]' (Which of the following Counselling Services do you have available to your students?)

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Indigenous students
- Regional, remote or rural students
- LGBTIQ students
- Students with a disability
- International students
- Other:

Do you provide accommodation assistance, either financial assistance or priority accommodation, to regional, rural and remote students?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes, financial assistance
- Yes, accommodation priority
- Yes, both financial assistance and accommodation priority

- No, neither financial assistance or accommodation

What percentage of regional, rural and remote students currently utilise accommodation support? If don't know put 101%.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes, financial assistance' *or* 'Yes, accommodation priority' *or* 'Yes, both financial assistance and accommodation priority' at question '16 [AccomAssist]' (Do you provide accommodation assistance, either financial assistance or priority accommodation, to regional, rural and remote students?)

Only numbers may be entered in this field.
Your answer must be at most 101

Please write your answer here:

%

Do you have scholarships or grants specifically for regional, rural and remote students?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

Do you have a mentor/buddy scheme for first year students?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target regional, rural and remote students?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

What support services do you have which are specifically provided for Indigenous students who are transitioning to university?

Please write your answer here:

What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- None
- Basic – we collect basic information such as number of visits, but not information about demographics/characteristics of students accessing the services.
- Intermediate – we collect information about number of visits and basic demographics for each service.
- Detailed – we collect data which we can integrate with other student data so that we can analyse student cohorts who access services
- Other

If relevant please clarify your answer further. For example, you may wish to note whether there is difference across services in data collection.

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Other' at question '22 [Collect]' (What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?)

Please write your answer here:

Does your university have plans in place to implement collection of information about student use of support services in the next 12 months?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'None' at question '22 [Collect]' (What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No

Which areas of student service delivery do you think that your university provides particularly well?

Please write your answer here:

Are there any areas of student service delivery which you think that your university could improve in?

Please write your answer here:

Thank you for your time and assistance with this research project.

If you have any questions about the project please contact the project team at ACER: Darren Matthews on 03 9277 5227 or at darren.matthews@acer.org, or Gina Milgate on 03 9277 5417 or at gina.milgate@acer.org.

Appendix G: Framework Data Variable Summary

<u>Resourcing</u>

Indicator	Data Source	Variable Name	Variable Label
Accommodation assistance	University survey		Do you provide accommodation assistance, either financial assistance or priority accommodation, to your general student population? Do you provide accommodation assistance, either financial assistance or priority accommodation, specific to regional, rural and remote students?
Accommodation guarantee	University survey		Do you have an accommodation guarantee?
Financial assistance	University survey		Do you have scholarships or grants for your general student population? Do you have scholarships or grants specifically for regional, rural and remote students?
Emergency counselling	University survey		Do you have a 24 hour counselling hotline or same day face to face counselling for emergency situations?
Counselling waiting list	University survey		On average, how long is the waiting list for students to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor? Do any cohorts of students have priority access to counsellors? • Regional, rural or remote students
Referrals	University survey		Which of the following Counselling Services do you have available to your students? • Trained academic staff who can refer students to counselling • Trained senior students who can refer students to counselling • Untrained academic staff who can refer students to counselling • Untrained senior students who can refer students to counselling

Sense of Belonging

Indicator	Data Source	Variable Name	Variable Label
Sense of belonging	Student Experience Survey (SES)	BELONG	Sense of belonging to institution
Indigenous Perspectives	University survey		What proportion of your support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery?
Indigenous Cultural Competency	University survey		What level of ongoing cultural competency training about Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges do your support staff have?
Orientation	University survey		Which of the following Orientation and Transition Services do you have available to your students? • Study skills/Academic sessions • Library orientation • Social events • Mentoring/buddy system • Help enrolling and timetabling • Orientation packs • Information on connecting with services • Pathway programs • Campus tours • Accommodation services • Accommodation advice • Specific orientation programs for regional, rural and remote students
Mentoring	University survey		Do you have a mentor/buddy scheme for first year students? If yes, are your mentors or buddies trained?
Perception of support to settle into study	Student Experience Survey (SES)	SETTLE	Supported to settle into university
Community outreach	University survey		Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target regional, rural and remote students? Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target Indigenous students?

Communication

Indicator	Data Source	Variable Name	Variable Label
Proactive/ specialised communications	University survey		How many times do you proactively telephone every first year student before the end of their first semester? How many times do you proactively email every first year students before the end of their first semester? Does your communications plan for first year students include appropriate contact with students during peak times? (e.g. mental health advice before exam periods)
Availability of support services	Student Experience Survey (SES)	SUPAVAIL	Other advisors available
Availability of academic support	Student Experience Survey (SES)	ACDAVAIL	Academic or learning advisors available
Availability of accommodation assistance	Student survey		In your first year at university, to what extent have you found the following support services to be available for regional, rural and remote students? • Accommodation services
Availability of Counselling services	Student survey		In your first year at university, to what extent have you found the following support services to be available for regional, rural and remote students? • Counselling

<u>Useability/Effectiveness</u>

Indicator	Data Source	Variable Name	Variable Label
Data analytics	University survey		What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?
Helpfulness of support services	Student Experience Survey (SES)	SUPHELP	Other advisors helpful
Helpfulness of academic support	Student Experience Survey (SES)	ACDHELP	Academic or learning advisors helpful
Helpfulness of orientation	Student Experience Survey (SES)	INDUCT	Induction / orientation activities relevant / helpful
Relevance of support offered	Student Experience Survey (SES)	OFFSUP	Have been offered relevant support
Helpfulness of Counselling services	Student survey		In your first year at university, to what extent have you found the following support services to be helpful for regional, rural and remote students? • Counselling
Helpfulness of Mentoring or buddy system	Student survey		In your first year at university, to what extent have you found the following support services to be helpful for regional, rural and remote students? • Mentoring

Appendix H: Self-reporting University Survey – Recommended Questions for Full Implementation

Which of the following Orientation and Transition Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Study skills/Academic sessions
- Library orientation
- Social events
- Mentoring/buddy system
- Help enrolling and timetabling
- Orientation packs
- Information on connecting with services
- Pathway programs
- Campus tours
- Accommodation services
- Accommodation advice
- Specific orientation programs for regional, rural and remote students

Which of the following Counselling Services do you have available to your students?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- On campus counsellors
- Online, university counsellors
- 24 hour hotline assistance
- Sexual assault & family violence services
- Advice/resources available online
- Trained academic staff who can refer students to counselling
- Trained senior students who can refer students to counselling
- Untrained academic staff who can refer students to counselling
- Untrained senior students who can refer students to counselling

Do you provide accommodation assistance, either financial assistance or priority accommodation, to your general student population?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes, financial assistance
- Yes, accommodation priority
- Yes, both financial assistance and accommodation priority
- No, neither financial assistance or accommodation

Do you provide accommodation assistance, either financial assistance or priority accommodation, specific to regional, rural and remote students?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes, financial assistance
- Yes, accommodation priority
- Yes, both financial assistance and accommodation priority
- No, neither financial assistance or accommodation

Do you have an accommodation guarantee for your general student population?

- Yes
- No

Do you have an accommodation guarantee for your RRR student population?

- Yes
- No

Do you have scholarships or grants for your general student population?

- Yes
- No

Do you have scholarships or grants specifically for regional, rural and remote students?

- Yes
- No

Do you have a 24 hour counselling hotline or same day face to face counselling for emergency situations?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes, a 24 hour hotline
- Yes, same day face to face counselling
- Yes, both a 24 hour hotline and same day face to face counselling
- No, neither a 24 hour hotline nor same day face to face counselling

On average, how long is the waiting list for students to get a non-emergency appointment with a counsellor?

Please choose **only one** of the following:
- Within 24 hours
- 1 to 2 days
- 3 to 6 days
- 1 to 2 weeks
- 3 to 4 weeks
- Longer than 4 weeks

Do any cohorts of students have priority access to counsellors?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Indigenous students
- Regional, rural or remote students
- LGBTIQ students
- Students with a disability
- International students
- Other:

What proportion of your support services have practices that embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their service delivery?

Please choose **only one** of the following:
- All support services
- A majority of support services
- A minority of support services
- None of our support services

What level of cultural competency training about Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges do your support staff have?

Please choose **only one** of the following:
- Staff have ongoing cultural competency training
- Staff have cultural competency training based on need
- Staff have one-off cultural competency training
- Staff have no cultural competency training

Do you have a mentor/buddy scheme for first year students?

- Yes
- No

If yes, are your mentors or buddies trained?
- Yes they are trained
- No they are untrained

Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target regional, rural and remote students?

- Yes
- No

Does your university have community outreach programs which specifically target Indigenous students?

- Yes
- No

How many times do you proactively telephone every first year student before the end of their first semester?

Please write your answer here:

How many times do you proactively email every first year students before the end of their first semester?

Please write your answer here:

Does your communications plan for first year students include appropriate contact with students during peak times? (e.g. mental health advice before exam periods)

- Yes
- No

What kind of data or statistics does your university collect about student use of support services?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- None
- Basic – we collect basic information such as number of visits, but not information about demographics/characteristics of students accessing the services.
- Intermediate – we collect information about number of visits and basic demographics for each service.
- Detailed – we collect data which we can integrate with other student data so that we can analyse student cohorts who access services

Appendix I: Student Survey Pilot Questions

In your first year at university, to what extent have you found the following support services to be <u>available</u> for regional, rural and remote students?
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [RRR]' (Are you a first year student who has moved from a regional, rural or remote area to study at university?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Not at all	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much	Not applicable
Accommodation services	○	○	○	○	○	○
Counselling	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mentoring	○	○	○	○	○	○
Academic support	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cultural support	○	○	○	○	○	○
Financial support	○	○	○	○	○	○

In your first year at university, to what extent have you found the following support services to be helpful for regional, rural and remote students?
Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '4 [RRR]' (Are you a first year student who has moved from a regional, rural or remote area to study at university?)

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Not at all	Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much	Not applicable
Accommodation services	○	○	○	○	○	○
Counselling	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mentoring	○	○	○	○	○	○
Academic support	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cultural support	○	○	○	○	○	○
Financial support	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please provide any other information about the support services at your university relevant to your needs.

Appendix J: Pilot Results by University (unpublished)