



Capability Statement

Access, participation and success

The University of Wollongong (UOW) is strongly committed to equity and social justice and has a proud history of working closely with our communities to drive increased participation and attainment among underrepresented groups.

UOW is committed to developing and fostering partnerships that enable the aspirations, awareness and attainment of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education. This includes regional and remote students, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds (LSES), students with a disability, First Nations students, and those who are the first in their families to study at university.

At UOW, 17.35 per cent of domestic undergraduate students are from LSES backgrounds, 29.15 per cent of students are from regional and remote areas, 3.13 per cent identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and 11.11 per cent of students are with a disability. First-in-family students represent 33 per cent of enrolments overall at UOW. First-in-family students make up 62.5 per cent of the UOW Eurobodalla student population, while 53.5 per cent of students at UOW Shoalhaven are the first in their family to attend university.

Our campuses in Liverpool, Sutherland, the Shoalhaven, Southern Highlands, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley make higher education more accessible to many, while pathways to our undergraduate degrees are provided by UOW College Australia's diploma courses. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation at UOW Bega Valley is around 10 per cent. Many of our undergraduate courses attract a high proportion of equity students and these include Early Childhood, Engineering, Science, Nursing and Primary Education.

In 2022, a high percentage of equity students were represented in UOW College Pathway Diploma courses: Diploma of Information Technology (43.8 per cent); Diploma of Engineering (51.9 per cent); Diploma of Medical and Health Sciences (60 per cent); Diploma of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (45.3 per cent); and Diploma of Science (46.7 per cent).

First-in-family students represent 33 per cent of enrolments at UOW.

UOW is ranked 38th in the world's universities for reducing inequalities in the 2022 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. Some of the metrics that helped to measure which universities were excelling at reducing inequalities were the number of first generation students, the number of students from developing countries, the proportion of students and staff with disabilities, the measures against discrimination, and the amount of research a university undertakes on reduced inequalities.

UOW has developed a series of research projects that aim to reduce inequalities across all aspects of society. Some of these include the Caring for Communities project, which has built research networks to engage key stakeholders in First Nations communities, and a project to address what women's empowerment means in terms of microfinance.

We have active researchers who are advancing thinking and practice in access, participation and success. This means we are contributing this new knowledge to the sector as well as developing our own leaders in this field.

OUTREACH AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION

UOW's Outreach and Widening Participation Team works to provide opportunities to students from equity backgrounds, delivering programs and activities that focus on engagement with higher education, with tangible outcomes for individuals.

The team partners with external organisations including other higher education providers, the Department of Education, Catholic Education Office, TAFE and the Country Universities Centre, to support students to understand and navigate their post high school options.



UOW has had a dedicated team, which is committed to widening the participation of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education for more than 15 years. Activities are embedded in the Bega, Batemans Bay, Shoalhaven, Wollongong, Southern Highlands, and South Western Sydney regions, where UOW has regional and metropolitan footprints. The team works with students from high school to Year 12 and on to vocational pathways, focusing on lifelong learning and engagement with education.

Programs include multi-week experiences delivered by UOW staff and student mentors as well as experiential opportunities at the UOW campuses and of specific disciplines in action.

STUDENT SUCCESS

At UOW, we are committed to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

In 2023, we are working collaboratively with students, staff and communities to develop UOW's Student Equity Framework, to take an institution wide and student-centred approach to celebrating the diversity and inclusion of our student cohort.

In addition to this, UOW has a number of programs and initiatives to support student success, including our Student's Hub, a multi-week approach to orientation, and targeted programs, specifically for first-in-family students and students on a humanitarian visa. These programs encourage students to start strong and build peer connections in their first years of study.

We also offer a number of initiatives that provide financial support to students, including financial counselling, emergency housing, food vouchers and a pantry service.

In addition to this, 'quiet' spaces have been established at our campuses for students experiencing neurodivergence of intersectionality to find spaces to study, sleep or be away from noise and lights.

UOW COLLEGE AUSTRALIA

UOW College Australia (UOWCA) provides domestic and international students with a number of pathways into tertiary studies at UOW, or into employment. It was the first Australian university college to offer Foundation Studies in 1989 and over the past 35 years has helped almost 35,000 students achieve their work and study goals.

The College's academic pathway programs consist of the University Entrance Program, and a suite of Diplomas in the disciplines of: Business, IT, Engineering, Science, Medical and Health Sciences, and Arts, Social Science and Humanities. English Preparation and VET courses are also available. Its programs are delivered at multiple locations, including UOW's Wollongong, Liverpool, Sydney, and regional campuses.

The College's vocational courses also provide a bridge between the world of work and study. The College offers VET courses in Nursing, Fitness, and Ageing and Individual Support. Traineeships are also offered in Ageing Support, where students can work and study at the same time.

A large number of equity students enrol in the Diploma courses offered at the College. In 2022, equity students totalled 60 per cent of enrolments in the Diploma of Medical and Health Sciences – a pathway to degrees such as Exercise Science and Public Health. In the Diploma of Arts, Social Science and Humanities fast-track course – which is a pathway to undergraduate degrees in Arts, Primary Education, Public Health and Social Work – equity students made up 53.3 per cent of enrolments.

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FIRST NATIONS PARTICIPATION

The Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (WIC) is committed to building the aspirations of First Nations Australians in tertiary education.

The centre provides programs and facilities that encourage, support and advance students from entry to university through to successful completion.

The Indigenous Admissions Program (IAP) administered by WIC offers an alternative pathway for First Nations Australians seeking entry into UOW's undergraduate programs.

UOW has taken significant steps to help mitigate the risk of academic attrition among First Nations students by encouraging the use of a new online tool to self-identify areas where support is needed. The Woolyungah Student Strengths and Needs Snapshot (WSSNS) self-assessment tool helps create individualised actions and pathways to help students navigate their academic success.

The tailored academic program (ITAP) is a free academic initiative that aims to improve educational outcomes for First Nations students. Tutors are recruited and appointed to eligible students by the WIC.

The award-winning Koori Aspirations Program - a collaboration between UOW's Outreach and Widening Participation Team and the WIC - is a mentoring and artwork program designed to enable the post-school aspirations of First Nations high school students in regional areas. The program was recognised with the prestigious Australian Rural Education Award in 2021.

The WIC and UOW College have put in place the Aunty Linda Cruse scholarship, which covers a student's tuition fees for all eligible First Nations students.

FROM DISABILITY TO ACCESSIBILITY

The Student Accessibility and Inclusion Team (SAI) service model and associated software platform were rolled out in 2022.

The SAI team offers personalised assistance for students living with a disability who are studying at UOW. The team uses access plans to enable students with disability to participate in education on the same basis as students without disability. As at August 2022, UOW had 1,684 students registered with this service. Adjustments provided through the service include: equipment including assistive technology; access for hearing impairment; adjustment to classroom/teaching space or placement; and mobility parking.



LUKE'S FUTURE TRANSFORMED

Hailing from Tamworth, Luke Bradbery never thought that university was within his reach. Despite his family hardship, Luke was determined to achieve good marks in his HSC and attend university.

Watching his mother's health decline with dementia, Luke wanted to undertake a double degree Bachelor of Psychological Science and Bachelor of Neuroscience. His ambition became a reality thanks to being awarded a UOW Transforming Futures Scholarship.

UOW's Transforming Future Scholarships are awarded to students who have demonstrated need, such as financial hardship and social disadvantage. Fully funded by alumni and community donations, the scholarship is aimed at students who might not otherwise be able to attend university.

UOW WELCOMES THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS TO DELIVER EXCEPTIONAL OUTCOMES

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