Federation University Australia

Student Retention and Success Plan 2015-2017

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Introduction

This Plan focuses on student retention in study. It assumes that student attrition should be reduced as much as possible and student retention thereby increased. This includes for students who are undergraduate and postgraduate, in higher education and vocational education and training, who are school leavers and mature age, who study on campus and online, who study via a partner onshore or offshore, who are Indigenous, full-time or part-time, international, domestic, fee-paying or in Commonwealth supported places and no matter the discipline in which they are studying. It is a Plan for all our students.

What do we mean by retention and attrition?

We can measure Higher Education attrition using the official Australian Government Department of Education and Training (DET) statistics and through our own FedUni Semester Attrition and Yearly Attrition statistics, which are based on information from our internal student systems. There are detailed definitions of these attrition-related terms in Appendix 2.

It is important to note that, as a baseline when performing comparisons, we are focused on attrition rates that do not take into account students who have moved to another university. However, our internal FedUni attrition rates do take into account students who transfer from one program to another within the University and these students are not counted as part of attrition.

Our VET attrition rate measures the percentage of students who withdraw from all studies during a calendar year. In 2014 the VET attrition rate was 4.8% and this improved substantially in 2015 to 2.5%.

What are the benefits of retaining more students?

For the vast majority of students, dropping out of study is usually disadvantageous as they lose the social and economic benefits that come later with a completed qualification. In addition to the benefits to the individual of completing a qualification, efforts to increase student retention have other benefits as well. These include:

- meeting our duty of care obligations;
- avoiding students accumulating debt without the qualifications to assist in attaining income to pay it off;
- improving the student experience;
- contributing to enhancing the life outcomes of graduates and their families;
- contributing to the sustainability of regional communities and economies through producing graduates who contribute significantly to them;
- increasing student numbers, thereby contributing to the financial viability of the University; and
- enhancing the University's reputation.

Is student drop out necessarily negative?

It should be acknowledged that for a small proportion of students, leaving the University is a good choice. This Plan focuses on the remaining proportion of students for whom dropping out of study is not the best option.

As endorsed by the Council of Federation University Australia, we are moving to become a more open access University. We increasingly welcome second chance learners, mature age students, those who have not succeeded educationally in traditional ways, school-leaver students with a wider range of ATAR scores and students from a variety of pathways and backgrounds.

There is a view held by some that we should not allow students who cannot succeed into University. Certainly, no-one wants to deliberately set a student up to fail. But how can we know if someone will succeed unless we offer them an opportunity?

However, access to University, including through increasingly open access, without appropriate support, is not opportunity. This means it is important for us to provide proactive, student-centred and focused service, support, intervention, communication and teaching. This Plan articulates how we should do so. The notion of providing the support that all students to whom we have given access need to maximise their chances of success is one that we have embraced at FedUni.

In the development of this Plan, there have been suggestions that we should become more exclusive and increasingly take students who are already successful educationally (for example, those with high ATARs) and thereby improve our student retention. Certainly metropolitan elite Universities use this approach and their attrition rates are usually below ten percent. However, regional universities, including ours, have a philosophy of inclusivity, opportunity and support rather than one focusing on validating previous educational attainment (such as through selecting only students with high ATARs). In any case, given ATAR is most highly correlated with socioeconomic status, if a regional university were to take the road of only taking students who had high secondary school performance, it would quickly become a very small operation, if it were to survive at all.

Current attrition

It is important to benchmark our attrition and retention rates so we can compare our performance to that of other universities in a competitive environment. We do this in a number of ways. The first is with universities who are located geographically close to us as these provide major competition for local students. In an increasingly competitive market, it is important to be aware of how well our competitors are doing at keeping the students they recruit, compared to us. According to the most recently reported comparative government statistics on the attrition rates for FedUni compared to some other universities during 2003-2014 (the most current figures available at the time of publication of this Plan), FedUni had the second highest rate of attrition in 2014 in comparison to all other Victorian universities. While this is not surprising given we are regional and the characteristics of our student cohort, it is something the Council would like us to strive to improve.

Table 1: Attrition rate for all commencing bachelor students in Victorian universities

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Swinburne	16.07	16.51	18.24	15.62	14.77	17.06	15.46	17.30	17.52	23.08	30.06	26.78
FedUni	21.83	21.09	20.73	20.41	21.34	21.53	17.74	20.46	23.47	25.97	24.95	25.28
VicUni	24.11	20.48	21.50	21.21	21.09	15.56	20.03	22.45	19.26	22.36	23.71	22.46
Deakin	17.46	17.00	17.25	15.93	15.93	15.20	14.40	13.29	14.86	16.11	17.94	18.92
La Trobe	20.55	19.03	17.27	16.24	18.17	16.96	15.57	16.99	16.70	16.50	17.04	17.74
Monash	12.22	12.25	11.79	11.03	9.65	8.98	9.35	10.23	9.99	9.78	10.49	9.70
RMIT	14.99	15.96	14.14	15.03	11.42	13.12	11.59	11.20	11.50	11.44	10.37	10.84
UniMelb	15.29	14.48	7.8	7.53	7.35	7.67	6.21	7.05	7.39	6.74	7.00	6.35
State average	**16.80**	**16.07**	**14.85**	**14.36**	**13.49**	**13.48**	**12.74**	**13.71**	**13.80**	**14.92**	**16.44**	**15.98**

(source : https://docs.education.gov.au/node/41761)

It is also important to compare ourselves with 'like' universities to get a valid measure of our performance. The second way we benchmark is against the Regional University Network (RUN) universities, which are in similar regional locations, are multi-campus and have similar student cohorts. The RUN group comprises Central Queensland University, Southern Cross University, the University of New England, the University of the Sunshine Coast, the University of Southern Queensland and FedUni. Table 2 shows the attrition rates for FedUni compared to RUN universities between 2003 and 2014.

Table 2: Attrition rate for all commencing bachelor students Regional University Network (RUN) universities

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Central Queensland	24.46	22.36	29.78	33.71	31.55	30.52	30.62	27.27	28.28	30.95	30.02	30.38
Southern Cross	27.31	27.73	29.86	26.17	26.35	22.74	26.30	25.06	25.80	30.21	28.63	30.22
New England	25.84	25.66	24.75	24.32	23.86	22.26	25.04	24.67	25.98	26.29	27.67	28.31
Sunshine Coast	38.83	36.19	34.97	34.75	31.51	27.48	26.35	26.49	27.44	28.16	27.39	26.24
FedUni	21.83	21.09	20.73	20.41	21.34	21.53	17.74	20.46	23.47	25.97	24.95	25.28
Southern Queensland	26.67	27.52	26.58	26.31	24.68	22.35	23.13	24.84	24.34	25.94	26.58	24.62
RUN average (unweighted)	**27.49**	**26.76**	**27.78**	**27.61**	**26.55**	**24.48**	**24.86**	**24.80**	**25.89**	**27.92**	**27.54**	**27.51**

(source : http://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/2013appendix4_0.xls)

As Table 2 shows, in the RUN group, FedUni had the second lowest attrition in 2014 While this is positive in terms of relative performance to 'like' universities, there are at least two reasons why we need to improve our student retention. The first is that several of our RUN partners are now strategically focused on student retention and based on anecdotal reports from RUN partners about the success of their retention initiatives, it is possible that time will show shifts in our relative performance. More importantly, despite Fed Uni's relatively good performance in 2014 against RUN universities, Council have determined that an attrition rate that equates to around one quarter of our students dropping out is one that must be improved.

Reasons for attrition from study

Research shows that students drop out for a range of reasons (See for example, ACER, 2015; Bean and Eaton, 2001; Devlin, 2010, 2012(a), 2012(b); Edwards and McMillan, 2015; Krause, 2005; Krause and Coates, 2008; Lobo, 2012: Nelson, Duncan and Clarke; 2009)

Some of the major reasons summarised from this research include the following.

- Demographic reasons, which can contribute to the likelihood of drop out, such as being: part-time; mature-age; online; first year; second year (especially having articulated from VET); first in family to attend tertiary study; from low socioeconomic status background; postgraduate; Indigenous; and/or disabled.
- Academic challenges, including those related to: dissatisfaction with the quality of the teaching/university; poor study skills relevant to the program of study; poor general study skills (such as time management); a lack of preparedness for tertiary study; and/or weak English language skills.
- Personal challenges, including those related to: health; finances; family responsibilities; employment commitments; difficulties making friends; relationship issues; and/or misadventure.
- Gap(s) between expectations and reality of University study.
- Inability to successfully navigate the administrative system.

Reasons for drop out are often multiple, complex and can interact with each other. Therefore, no one 'fix' will arrest drop out for every student. In some instances, it may be in a student's interest to leave the University, but in many cases, dropping out is unnecessary and detrimental to both the student and the university. The Student Retention and Success Plan is focused on curtailing those unnecessary dropouts and focusing on the factors over which the university has some influence.

A strategic priority for the University

As well as representing significant human loss, student attrition from tertiary education has significant financial ramifications, both for the students who withdraw from their program before completing their program and for the University. There are, therefore, both moral and economic reasons to prioritise a university wide effort to improve our student retention and enable more of our students to succeed in their studies. The intention of this Plan is to contribute to coordinating this effort.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) regulates and assures the quality of Australia's higher education sector, both private and public. TEQSA evaluates the performance of higher education providers against the Higher Education Standards Framework - specifically, the Threshold Standards, which all providers must meet in order to enter and remain within Australia's higher education system (TEQSA, 2015a). TEQSA uses a 'traffic-light' reporting method to highlight areas of risk to providers and in 2015 FedUni received an amber light (moderate risk) for attrition and a red light (high risk) for completions (TEQSA, 2015b). TEQSA will explore these risk areas as it examines us for re-registration in 2016.

In early 2015, the Federation University Council endorsed a major priority for FedUni and approved an institution-wide 5-year initiative to draw on research and best-practice principles and activity to create a coordinated, institution-wide strategy to minimise attrition across all of our programs and partners on and offshore, on and off campus. The central target is to reduce the overall student attrition rate at FedUni by at least 3%. This Plan is a central plank of that initiative.

Principles

The principles that support the Student Retention and Success Plan are:

1. **A higher rate of student retention than what we currently have is a non-negotiable goal.**

   Our student retention rate is close to one-quarter of our students. There is wide agreement that we can and should do better than this. While it is not possible, nor desirable, for FedUni to reach 100% retention of students, there are strategies in which we can engage that will individually and collectively contribute to reducing attrition.

2. **All Federation University employees have a responsibility and the ability to contribute to student retention.**

   Every single area of the University has a direct or indirect impact on the quality of the student experience. It is the responsibility of the whole University community, and every single staff member within it, to help retain as many students as possible. Staff workload is important to note but it is often only small changes to practice that are needed to make a difference to retention.

3. **A student-centred approach is critical.**

   Often in Universities, processes, systems and rules are not always designed, implemented, reviewed or improved with the student experience as a priority. To make a difference to student retention, we must reconsider some of our former practices, and embrace a student-centred mindset going forward.

4. **Early intervention is a critical feature of all successful student retention initiatives.**

   Once a student has dropped out of study, any intervention is likely to be futile. Prior to that point, we have small windows of opportunity to influence students' decision making, point them to resources, services and support, and offer alternatives to dropping out. Intervening early with care will ensure fewer students drop out.

5. **We need to be evidence-based.**

   Our interventions and decisions about where to focus our efforts must be based on evidence. As far as possible, all strategies employed in this project will be evidence based and will come from refereed literature on student retention in Australia; market research with reasonable reliability and validity; what our students tell us helps them stay and succeed; and/or successful initiatives put in place by other universities.

Objectives

The Student Retention and Success Project has identified the following objectives as the foundation of its strategic plan:

1. **Ensure the use of reliable and valid attrition, retention and success data.**
2. **Develop and maintain a proactive, student-centred culture throughout the University.**
3. **Develop and implement targeted intervention and support, starting with high attrition 'hot spots'.**
4. **Ensure strategic, proactive and continuous communication around student retention and success**
5. **Facilitate the highest quality of learning possible for each and every student.**

Priority 1: Ensure the provision and use of reliable and valid attrition, retention and success data

No.	Objective	Strategies	Measurable Targets/Outcomes	Responsibility	Timeline
1.1	**Create and communicate clear definitions for retention, attrition and success.**	Develop definitions to be used in the appropriate context (Government meaning and FedUni meanings)	Formal definitions confirmed and communicated to determine attrition, retention and success in Government and FedUni terms.	SRS Data Analyst	June 2015
		Set clear periods for analysis and comparison of attrition, retention and success data.	Clear periods for analysis and comparison of attrition, retention and success data determined, and a calendar with key dates, attrition, retention and success data published and communicated.	SRS Data Analyst	September 2015
1.2	**Using the periods for analysis and comparison of attrition, retention and success data as determined under Objective 1.1, provide attrition, retention and success analysis and reporting.**	Until a Business Intelligence / Data Warehouse System is implemented, continue to compile existing student data into a database to determine current and historical attrition and retention figures.	Existing student enrolment records compiled into a single database for report development.	SRS Data Analyst	Ongoing
		Access relevant data from a range of sources including academic records, surveys, learning management systems, VTAC records, demographic data and records of student engagement with the University.	Accessibility to appropriate, accurate and timely attrition, retention and success reports from static data systems by appropriate key stakeholders.	SRS Data Analyst	Ongoing
		Produce graphical and tabular reports based on currently available static data sets.	Accessibility to appropriate, accurate and timely attrition, retention and success reports from static data systems by appropriate key stakeholders.	SRS Data Analyst	Ongoing
		Produce reports that provide filtering for closer analysis of selected cohorts.	Accessibility to appropriate, accurate and timely attrition, retention and success reports from static data systems by appropriate key stakeholders.	SRS Data Analyst	Ongoing
		Progress reports from a static to dynamic nature through the use of a Business Intelligence tool connected to real-time data systems.	Accessibility to appropriate, accurate and timely attrition, retention and success reports from real-time data systems by appropriate key stakeholders.	SRS Data Analyst	December 2016 and ongoing

1.3	Implement integrated data systems and overlaying Business Intelligence systems to provide access to real-time data.	Establish attrition, retention and success dimensions and measures to be included in data warehouse /repository.	Dimensions and measures included in data warehouse are consistent with SRS analysis and reporting requirements.	SRS Data Analyst	March 2016
		Integrate data from key university data systems into a centralised warehouse / repository.	Data from key university data systems integrated into a centralised warehouse and made available for real-time analysis.	DVC (SSS)	June 2016
1.4	Implement predictive modelling analysis and reporting	Progress reporting capacity from past tense 'what happened', to pro-active alerts.	Identification of at-risk cohorts of students in advance.	SRS Data Analyst	January 2016 and ongoing
		Forecasting and predicting attrition, retention and success outcomes.	Modelling of likely attrition, retention and success outcomes over future periods.	SRS Data Analyst	January 2017 and ongoing
1.5	Participate in benchmarking of attrition, retention and success.	Collect institutional data from Government and other relevant repositories.	Data collected and available for benchmarking purposes	SRS Data Analyst	Ongoing
		Undertake benchmarking of FedUni statistics against other universities including with Australian, State, Regional Universities Network (RUN) and like Universities to identify successes and improvement opportunities.	Analysis of FedUni benchmarking undertaken, published and distributed as appropriate.	SRS Data Analyst	Ongoing
		Prepare benchmarking analysis reports for governance and other relevant committees	Committee reports prepared and provided	SRS Data Analyst	Semester 2, 2015 and ongoing
1.6	Measure project initiatives for their impact on retention and success	Identify targets for attrition, retention and success.	Targets for attrition, retention and success set and communicated.	DVC (L&Q)	2016 and ongoing
		Analyse changes in attrition, retention and success data against targets.	Analysis of changes in attrition, retention and success data against targets reported and communicated to key stakeholders.	SRS Data Analyst	August 2015 and ongoing.
1.7	Design and implement a suite of surveys and other mechanisms for student sub-groups to enable feedback on the student experience	Form a survey working party to coordinate feedback on the student experience	Survey working party formed, chair and terms of reference established.	DVC (L&Q)	July 2015

		Identify student sub-groups and times for surveying (e.g. FY week 6; direct entry students; stratified sample for total experience)	Student sub-groups and times for surveying identified	Survey Working Party	September, 2015 for initial groups, ongoing evaluation.
		Develop questionnaires and mechanisms with stakeholders	Questionnaires and mechanisms developed.	Survey Working Party	Ongoing
		Provide students with appropriate responses from survey results and other feedback mechanisms.	Student communication implemented.	Survey Working Party	Within 1 month of data collection.
		Provide relevant governance and other committees with relevant feedback	Committee reports prepared and provided	Survey Working Party	Semester 2, 2015 and ongoing

Priority 2: Develop and maintain a proactive, student-centric culture throughout the University

No.	Objective	Strategies	Measurable Targets/Outcomes	Responsibility	Timeline
2.1	**Develop and implement a student-centric, 'learning-centred' FedUni focused training program for all staff.**	**In addition to the strategies in Priority 1.4 of the *BOLD Learning and Teaching Plan 2015-2017*.**			
		Prepare and disseminate instructional videos on communicating with students to offer HR for inclusion in staff development.	Development of Faculty specific manuals/online resources for staff.	Director CLIPP	September, 2015 and ongoing
		Offer mental health training to all commencing staff who have direct student interactions.	Increasing % of staff trained each year	Director Student Connect	April 2016 and ongoing
		Contribute and embed library content into training programs for new academic, teaching and professional staff.	Learning technology incorporated into induction of all staff	Director HR, Director Library Services	September, 2015 and ongoing
2.2	**Develop and implement student retention training and professional development for frontline staff**	Develop and implement an appropriate retention training program for frontline administrative staff.	Training program developed and available to be delivered for new, contract, sessional and ongoing frontline administrative staff.	Registrar	January 2017 and ongoing
		Create and maintain a Student Retention website for staff.	Student Retention website up and running and currency maintained	SRS Initiative Coordinator	July 2015 and ongoing
2.3	**Ensure provision of up to date research, professional development materials and resources for all teaching staff**	Create and maintain a Student Retention website for staff.	Student Retention website up and running and currency maintained.	SRS Initiative Coordinator	July 2015 and ongoing

2.4	**Promote awareness about and a culture around the importance of supporting student transition throughout the institution.**	Revise and update Orientation including ensuring Orientation and FedReady are complementary.	Updated Orientation program in place for first and second semesters	Director, Student Connect	July 2015 and ongoing
		Build on Student Lifecycle Weekly Themes pilot and integrate into central and faculty led activities and events.	Evidence of increasing Student Lifecycle Weekly Themes integration in all Schools, Faculties and Directorates	ADSRS, Director CLIPP	July 2015 and ongoing
		Suitable staff involvement in Orientation programs.	Evidence of increased staff knowledge of and involvement in Orientation.	DVC (A)	July 2016 and ongoing
		Integrate Student Lifecycle Weekly Themes in Mentor Program.	Evidence of student awareness of Student Lifecycle Weekly Themes.	Manager, Student Futures Program	July 2015 and ongoing
2.5	**Develop and implement a continuous improvement approach through integration of the 'student-centred' concept across the organisation.**	Include student centeredness/'customer service' as integral part of PRDP for Faculty staff.	Increasing % of staff in each area have this in PRDP	DVC (A)	2016 for PRDP
		Include student centeredness/'customer service' as a standing item on staff meeting agendas.	Evidence of inclusion on staff meeting agendas & minutes.	DVC (A) DVC (L&Q) DVC (E) DVC (SSS) Chief Operating Officer	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Add a VC Award for outstanding student service via nomination from a student.	Student nominated Award in place and available	CLIPP	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Add a VC Award to recognise outstanding student service for administrative and support staff	Award in place and available	CLIPP	September, 2015 and ongoing
		Further engagement with Student Senate to improve two-way communication and feedback to students when their suggested changes have been implemented.	Evidence of such communication in student senate minutes or report or FedNews and social media	Student Connect	July, 2015 and ongoing

2.6	Enhance the enrolment process to be user friendly, simple and straightforward.	Develop and implement a simplified and user-friendly online enrolment process.	Enrolment process simplified and creates less abandoned processes	Registrar	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Clarify and communicate processes for enrolment for returning students.	Increased and earlier enrolment for later year students	CLIPP / Manager ICS	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Enhance face to face on campus enrolment days.	Evidence of involvement of all relevant staff including teaching and other staff from discipline and mentors on enrolment day	ADSRS	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Ongoing evaluation of the enrolment process.	Commencing/Continuing Student Survey	Director, Student Connect	July, 2015 and ongoing
2.7	Ensure students have timely access to compulsory course resources, especially textbooks	Identification and follow up with teaching/ course coordination staff who have not submitted requests in a timely manner.	Book lists confirmed by course coordinators immediately when requested by bookshop.	DVC (A) AD (L&T) Program Coordinators	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Develop strategy at Faculty level for monitoring timely selection of course resources.	Increased percentage of timely selection of resources. E-book options included in course descriptions.	ADSRS	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Recommended readings to be drawn from licenced e-resources via library and/or free online open access sources (eg. OER) as much as possible.	Increase % of courses in which, online readings used in lieu of textbook.	ADSRS, Director Library Services	July, 2015 and ongoing

Priority 3: Develop and implement targeted intervention and support, starting with high attrition 'hot spots'

No.	Objective	Strategies	Measurable Targets/Outcomes	Responsibility	Timeline
3.1	**Develop and implement institution-wide early detection and intervention processes to proactively identify and respond to students who are at risk of failure or withdrawal.**	Form working party to examine these issues and provide recommendations on improvements	Working party Chair appointed, membership decided and terms of reference agreed	DVC (L&Q)	July, 2015
		Development of an 'At Risk' matrix that assists in establishing both the type and level of risks.	Matrix developed and disseminated	Working Party Chair	September, 2015
		Development of a pre and post arrival rubric that includes the development of a student lifecycle map (ensure consistency with student lifecycle developed in 4.1.3 ("create student lifecycle identifying key points")	Student lifecycle map developed and available on SRS website	Working Party Chair	October, 2015
		Map and review current interaction processes and compose institutional wide strategy which is flexible to accommodate different sub-cohorts.	Intervention matrix developed and disseminated	Working Party Chair	November, 2015 and ongoing
		Review and update policies and procedures, adhering to ESOS and legislative requirements, designed to inform and support students identified at risk.	Revised policies reviewed, approved and published	Working Party Chair	January, 2016
3.2	**Review current academic progress and processes within, and across faculties, including ratification prior to release of semester results and make recommendations for improvement, including:**	Form working party to examine these issues and provide recommendations for improvements.	Working party Chair appointed, membership decided and terms of reference agreed.	DVC (L&Q) DVC (A) and ADSRS	June, 2015

	CORRESPONDENCE – Including 'at risk', show cause, restrictions and exclusion letters.	Review and redraft process and correspondence with students in light of legal requirements to ensure clarity and support services identified.	Evidence of improved and consistent progress, management and correspondence with students as per legal, ESOS, and Policy requirements: advising them of their 'at risk' status and the process; providing advice and/or direction on the suite of academic, pastoral and social support.	Working Party Chair	September, 2015
	PROCESSES – Academic progress, pre-ratification and ratification.	Map processes of ratification and progress prior to release of final results across all faculties (including partner programs) and make recommendations that demonstrate best practice for consistency and equity for all students across the university.	Evidence of improved and consistent processes to address student progress (from semester to semester and year to year) and to policy requirements.	ADSRS	October 2015 and ongoing.
3.3	**Develop and implement targeted intervention and support programs and courses in each academic/teaching unit at the Program Level and the Course Level with the highest attrition and highest fail rates.**	**PROGRAM LEVEL** Identify the two programs each semester in each of the Schools, FedUni TAFE and Fed College with the highest attrition and highest fail rates	Programs identified	SRS Data Analyst	June, 2015 and ongoing
		Undertake a detailed analysis of each semester where the attrition and failure occurs in each program.	Analysis undertaken and presented to SRS Team.	SRS Data Analyst	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Develop targeted and specific interventions, including outbound call campaigns, and support to arrest this attrition and the high fail rates.	A decline in attrition and failure rates from each program	ADSRS, Program Coordinators & Program Managers, Director VET Practice, Director Fed College	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Introductory communication (emails/phone calls/newsletter) from the Program Coordinator	Report from each Faculty/ College/FedUni TAFE program	ADSRS, Director VET Practice, Director Fed College	July, 2015 and ongoing

		COURSE LEVEL Where they are outside the programs identified above, identify the two courses in each of the Faculties, FedUni TAFE and Fed College with the highest attrition and highest fail rates.	Courses identified	SRS Data Analyst	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Undertake a detailed analysis of why the attrition and failure occurs in each course.	Analysis undertaken and presented to SRS Team	ADSRS, Program Coordinators & Program Managers, Director VET Practice, Director Fed College	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Develop targeted and specific interventions and support to arrest this attrition and high fail rates.	A decline in attrition and failure rates from each course	Program Coordinators, Program Managers, ADSRSs	July, 2015 and ongoing.
3.4	**Develop and implement targeted intervention and support for student sub-cohorts at high risk of withdrawal, specifically commencing students, continuing students, transition/progression students, FedUni TAFE students, and Higher Degree Research students.**	**COMMENCING STUDENTS** Using evidence from Moodle and Mentor non-engagement, identify commencing higher education students at high risk of dropping out.	Timely student lists generated each study period	Manager, Student Futures Team Leader, Contact Centre/ADSRSs	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Develop targeted and specific interventions including outbound call campaign and support to arrest this attrition	A decline in attrition in each course	Manager ICS	March, 2015 and ongoing
		CONTINUING STUDENTS Identify patterns of drop out for second year higher education students including demographics, engagement behaviour, program and course location.	Analysis undertaken and presented to ADSRSs	SRS Data Analyst	September, 2015 and ongoing
		Develop targeted and specific interventions and support to arrest this attrition.	A decline in attrition for these students	ADSRS/Director, CLIPP/Director, Student Connect	November, 2015 and ongoing

			TRANSITION/PROGRESSION Identify patterns of drop out for between year higher education students including demographics, engagement behaviour, program and course location and the like.	Analysis undertaken and presented to ADSRSs	SRS Data Analyst	September, 2015 and ongoing
			Develop targeted and specific interventions and support to arrest this attrition.	A decline in attrition for these students	ADSRS/Director, CLIPP/Director, Student Connect	November, 2015 and ongoing
			FEDUNI TAFE STUDENTS Identify patterns of drop out and failure for TAFE students.	Analysis undertaken and presented to ADSRSs, Exec Dean FedUni TAFE	SRS Data Analyst	September, 2015 and ongoing
			Develop targeted and specific interventions and support to arrest this attrition and failure.	A decline in attrition and failure for these students	Program Coordinators/Leaders/ Managers and ADSRSs	November, 2015, and ongoing
			HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH (HDR) STUDENTS Identify patterns of dropout and completion rates for HDR students.	Analysis undertaken and presented to ADSRSs and DVC(R&I)	SRS Data Analyst	September, 2015 and ongoing
			Develop targeted and specific interventions and support to improve retention and timely completion of post graduate degrees by research.	Decrease in postgraduate withdrawals and increase in timely completions of 75%.	DVC (Academic) DVC (Research and Innovation), Postgraduate Supervisors	November, 2015 and ongoing

Priority 4: Ensure strategic, proactive and continuous communication around student retention and Success

No.	Objective	Strategies	Measurable Targets/Outcomes	Responsibility	Timeline
4.1	**Document and disseminate a student lifecycle, identifying critical intervention points**	Form working party.	Working party Chair appointed, membership decided and terms of reference agreed	DVC (L&Q)	July, 2015
		Working party prepares documentation and seeks endorsement.	Lifecycle created and available on SRS website	Working Party Chair	September, 2015
4.2	**Develop a unified communication plan and log for all groups of students across the lifecycle.**	Form working party.	Working party Chair appointed, membership decided and terms of reference agreed	DVC (L&Q)	August, 2015
		Clearly identify all prospective and current student sub-groups (commencing, continuing, international, partner, online etc)	Sub-groups documented	Working Party Chair	August, 2015
		Develop timetable of significant dates for communication of each sub-group (all campuses, facilities, areas, partners etc) for each are of the university.	Timetable completed and documented	Working Party Chair	February, 2016
		Create appropriate methods of communication (texts, videos, postcards, social media, tailored newsletters, new current student website).	Methods agreed and prepared	Marketing, External Communications Consultants	August, 2015
		Develop guidelines for particular types of communication to different audiences.	Guidelines created, approved and published	Registrar	February, 2016 and ongoing
		In collaboration with CRM project manager, develop a process of record keeping that enables all staff to view and record what communications have been sent and when.	Record prepared and disseminated	Manager, Integrated Customer Service	October, 2015
		Prepare and disseminate an action plan of implementation.	Action plan prepared and disseminated	Working Party	October, 2015

4.3	**Ensure clear and concise information about induction / preparatory /orientation/ transition and concurrent support is disseminated to all student sub-groups before and during each study period and mapped to the life cycle for all years**	Timely provision to students of information and access support, both in person and on-line.	Increase in student uptake	ADSRS	February, 2016 and ongoing
		Provide specialised induction for Honours and Masters students including on-line and course work students to familiarise them with support.	Development, delivery and evaluation of pilot inductions for Masters students	LSAs/SFP	February, 2016 and ongoing
		Develop a comprehensive orientation for online students.	Development, delivery and evaluation of orientation for online students	CLIPP/Library	November, 2015 and ongoing
		Segment and take into account feedback from students and others about what they want/need to know through the student lifecycle and respond according.	Evidence of ongoing improvement of student needs throughout lifecycle.	CLIPP and Working Party Chair	February, 2016 and ongoing
4.4.	**Ensure clear and concise information about induction / preparatory /orientation/ transition and concurrent support is disseminated to all staff before and during each study period and lifecycle.**	Include all relevant information on SRS website.	Up to date website	SRS Project Coordinator	August, 2015 and ongoing
		Ensure regular communications to Executive Deans, Heads of School, Faculty Business Managers, Student Administration, Contact Centre and International Student Support Office.	Increase in student uptake of relevant programs	ADSRS	August, 2015 and ongoing
		Training/briefings and workshops for staff on student centredness/'customer service' as part of HR professional development calendar.	Increasing % attendance at such professional development	Director HR	September, 2015 and ongoing
		Participation in training included in PRDP for all staff	Evidence of inclusion in individual PRDPs.	DVC (A) DVC (L&Q) DVC (E) DVC (SSS) Chief Operating Office	January, 2016

4.5	Ensure information about student retention and success regularly reaches all relevant staff throughout the year	Ensure regular updates to all staff in Fed News and, where appropriate through University Facebook and Twitter.	Monthly FedNews items on achievements/FaceBook 'likes' measured. Increases social media sharing.	SRS Project Coordinator, SRS team members	August, 2015 and ongoing
		Ensure regular updates to all staff via VC's newsletter	VC newsletter includes up to date information on student retention and success	DVC (L&Q) SRS Initiative Coordinator	August, 2015 and ongoing
		Regular briefings of Vice Chancellor's Senior Team	Senior team are aware of and contributing to developments	DVC (L&Q)	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Regular briefings to and from Executive Deans and Directors	Organisational leaders are aware of and contributing to developments	DVC (A)	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Faculty-specific information distributed through Faculty channels (newsletters, emails, briefings and staff meetings in person rather than emails)	Staff aware of retention information and success at the Faculty level	ADSRS	July, 2015 and ongoing
		Share good news stories with students.	Report generated on the interactions with students.	SRS Initiative Coordinator	Ongoing

Priority 5: Facilitate the highest quality of learning possible for each and every student

No.	Objective	Strategies	Measurable Targets/Outcomes	Responsibility	Timeline
5.1	**Ensure all teaching staff at the University are appropriately qualified to teach**	**In addition to the strategies Priority 1 of the *BOLD Learning and Teaching Plan 2015-2017*:**			
		Mandate completion of the GCETT for all new academic staff at levels A, B and C with teaching responsibilities, with exemptions for those who hold current and relevant teaching qualifications or awards.	GCETT part of PRDP, and a condition of passing probation; Increased uptake in GCETT.	DVC (A) & DVC (L&Q)	January, 2016 and ongoing
		Revise and update position descriptions for all positions that require teaching.	Include GCETT or equivalent in desired qualifications for levels A, B and C, noting University will provide free access to GCETT where applicable include understanding of learning needs of FedUni student cohorts in key selection criteria.	Director, HR	September, 2015 and ongoing
		Review and improve teaching staff recruitment process and implement interview selection processes that best identify staff suitable for teaching FedUni student cohorts.	Teaching qualifications, evidence of student-centredness and a focus on student success included in criteria for all teaching positions.	Heads of Schools, Director, HR DVC (A)	September, 2015 and ongoing
5.2	**Embed academic, literacy and numeracy skills support into curriculum where appropriate.**	Ensure FedReady online modules, library skills and the like identified to modify and embed into curriculum where appropriate.	Evidence of inclusion of relevant skills support in curriculum across all first year programs	ADSRS, ADLTs, LSAs, Library, Program Leaders and Managers	February, 2016 and ongoing
5.3	**Ensure high quality course descriptions are available for every course at least one week, and preferably two weeks, prior to the start of the study period.**	Ensure adherence to assessment policy and procedure, particularly in relation to pre and post moderation in all courses.	Evidence that pre- and post-moderation checklists are filled out by all course coordinators, monitored by Program Leaders and ADSRSs and ADLTs.	DVC (A)	February, 2016 and ongoing
		Develop and communicate timelines for the process for development and approval of course descriptions	Timeline and process communicated within all faculties.	ADLTs, ADSRS	February, 2016 and ongoing

5.4	**Enable early identification of student academic needs.**	Commencing students complete an assessment at the beginning of semester, receive results and strongly encouraged to seek assistance where required.	Increase of % of student undertaking commencing student assessment	Director Fed College	September, 2015 and ongoing
		Early assessment tasks with feedback for all students in core courses where appropriate.	All Program Coordinators have implemented early assessment tasks in core courses	Heads of School	October, 2015 and ongoing
5.5	**Further improve promotion opportunities for outstanding teaching that contributes to student retention and success.**	Develop and implement promotion stream for excellence in learning enhancement and student retention.	Process developed and process stream implemented.	DVC (L&Q)/ DVC (A)	September, 2015 and ongoing
		Develop and implement student nominated teaching awards.	Add student nominated award to VCs awards	Director, CLIPP/ Student Senate	September, 2015 and ongoing

Appendix One: Acronyms used in this document

AD:	Associate Dean
ADLT:	Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)
ADSRS:	Associate Dean (Student Retention and Success)
ASQA:	Australian Skills Quality Authority
BOLD:	Blended On-Line and Digital
CLIPP:	Centre for Learning, Innovation and Professional Practice
CMS:	Content Management System
COO:	Chief Operating Officer
DVC (A):	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
DVC (E):	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)
DVC (L&Q):	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Quality)
DVC (R&I):	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
DVC (SSS):	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Support and Services)
ED:	Executive Dean
EQ:	Employer Quality
ESOS:	Education Services for Overseas Students
GCETT:	Graduate Certificate in Education (Tertiary Teaching)
HDR:	Higher Degree Research
ICS:	Integrated Customer Service
LMS:	Learning Management System
LQ:	Learning and Quality
LSAs:	Learning Skills Advisors
PRDP:	Performance Review and Development Program
SFP:	Student Futures Program
TEQSA:	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency
VRQA:	Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

Appendix Two: Definitions of attrition

The Student Retention and Success Initiative utilises both the *Australian Government – Department of Education and Training* definition of attrition and *Federation University* definitions of attrition to track student attrition at the University.

The development of *Federation University* definitions of attrition are necessary to provide more detailed analysis of attrition at set periods in time and to more readily identify 'hot-spots' for targeted intervention.

We have therefore established two periods of measuring student attrition:

1. Yearly Attrition; and

2. Semester Attrition.

Our *Yearly Attrition* rate is useful as a bench-marking target and providing a measure of the success of our student retention and success initiative. Our definition of Yearly Attrition aligns closely with DETs definition to allow comparison between the two figures.

Our *Semester Attrition* rates provide us with an ongoing snapshot of our attrition on a semester by semester basis. They also enable the measurement of 'pre-census' attrition each semester, i.e. students who drop out before census date, given that these students aren't reported in DETs attrition statistics.

Higher Education Definitions

Australian Government - Department of Education and Training Definition

The following definition is provided by the Australian Government - Department of Education and Training (DET). It measures attrition of ***commencing bachelor* students only.** We use the DET definition in order to benchmark our performance around these commencing students against the performance of other Universities. TEQSA also use commencing attrition for risk rating purposes, although TEQSA looks at *all* commencing students in all programs (i.e., including, for example, international as well as domestic students and students commencing at postgraduate as well as undergraduate level. DET attrition does not include students who drop-out prior to Census Date.

DET Commencing Attrition - "Attrition rate for year(x) is the proportion of students who commenced a bachelor course in year(x) who neither complete nor return in year(x + 1)."

(Source : http://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/2013appendix4_0.xls)

This can be interpreted as the % of students from the commencing cohort of bachelor students who didn't return the following year and haven't completed their program,.

Federation University Definitions

Our Yearly Attrition definition varies slightly from the DET definition so that we can measure attrition of all higher education students (excluding non-award students), including continuing students and students who are enrolled in non-bachelor higher education programs.

Federation University Higher Education Yearly Attrition – Attrition rate for year(x) is the proportion of students who studied a program post-census date in year(x) who neither complete nor return in year(x + 1). Students enrolled in non-award programs are not included.

Federation University Higher Education Semester Attrition is the proportion of students who are no longer enrolled in any course, as a percentage of the total number of students that were enrolled from the start of semester. Students who commence 'Leave from studies' during the semester are excluded from the enrolled tally. Students enrolled in non-award programs are not included.

VET Definition

Our definition of VET attrition is similar to the Higher Education definition, whereby a student must withdraw from all Modules / Unit of Studies during that given calendar year.

Federation University VET Attrition *is the proportion of students who have withdrawn from all studies as a percentage of all of the students who enrolled in VET that year.*

The *Victorian VET Student Statistical Collection* is performed on a regular basis, enabling data that can be analysed and reported on a monthly basis. The data can also be categorised and reported by a variety of elements, including Level of Education, Field of Education, and student demographic identifiers.

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