

INCORPORATING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS INTO PRACTICE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT

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Incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander¹ content into social work degrees is now recognised as a core component to ensure a university course is accredited by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). This article examines a number of existing frameworks for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in the curriculum across the health disciplines, and outlines a model developed and implemented at the Australian Catholic University. The article identifies some of the implications that creating such models might have for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the university sector and beyond.

In 2009 the Australian government published its action plan for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) (DEWHA 2009). In this report the government identified several critical areas as a national priority for preparing students for the twenty first century in this culturally diverse world. Some of the priority

¹ The use of the three different terminologies; Aboriginal and Torres Islander People, Indigenous and First Nation People have been used interchangeably throughout this article. This has been done consciously and in consideration of the corresponding terminology used in the referenced literature.

**Bennett, B. C. Coghlan, K. Evans and C. Morse (2018)
'Incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curriculum
Frameworks into Practice and Implications for Employment'
Journal of Australian Political Economy
No. 82, pp. 171-89.**

areas included economic, social and environmental sustainability. To achieve such goals, students will need skills, knowledge and values that enable them to build competence and capacity in these areas (Whiteside *et al.* 2017). This includes cultural competence, which is defined as the acquisition of:

knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and contemporary realities and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols, combined with the proficiency to engage and work effectively in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts congruent to the expectations of Indigenous Australian peoples (Universities Australia 2011a: 6).

In areas like social work, it has been suggested that working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients requires considering both trauma and culture. This can help reduce ethnic and racial disparities and inequalities and subsequently have a positive effect on people's lives, relationships and workplace (Herring *et al.* 2013: 115).

This echoes the clear mandate for educational preparation under the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW 2012), whereby graduates must have ability to work with diversity and demonstrate respect for cultural difference, appreciating the historical and contemporary interface between non-Indigenous and Indigenous cultures in Australia. Developing cultural competence in universities relies on a range of processes and strategies which include increasing employment and career development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, appropriate cultural competency training for non-Indigenous staff and efforts to develop and implement Indigenous curriculum frameworks.

Australian universities have been aware of the need to develop skills to build cultural competence and this has been reflected in strategic plans and Reconciliation Action Plans (Maguire and Young 2015) all including the goal of achieving cultural competence. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, significant improvements can be made in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia if there are culturally safe workers and programs available more broadly (*e.g.* in social services) (Walker and Sonn 2010). Secondly, embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content signals to students, workers and organisations that having a sound understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, history, world views and knowledges is pivotal for successful outcomes not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander peoples but also for others from diverse backgrounds (Maguire and Young 2015).

The National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (Universities Australia 2011a) was created through a two-year project that commenced in 2009, in collaboration with the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council and with funding provided by the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. It acknowledged the role that universities should be playing in being agents of change.

The five key guiding principles for cultural competency in Australian universities are:

1. Indigenous people should be actively involved in university governance and management;
2. All graduates of Australian universities should be culturally competent;
3. University research will be conducted in a culturally competent way in partnership with Indigenous participants;
4. Indigenous staffing will be increased at all appointment levels and, for academic staff, across a wider variety of academic fields;
5. Universities will operate in partnership with their Indigenous communities and will help disseminate culturally competent practices to the wider community (Universities Australia 2011b: 8).

Cultural competence, curriculum and Indigenous employment

There are several ways in which the need for cultural competence and Indigenous curriculum frameworks interact with employment. Firstly, there is a need to increase employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in higher education in order to effectively develop and implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum frameworks. Secondly, the presence of more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff may assist in attracting Indigenous students and encouraging student completions, with a potential flow-on effect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment beyond the academy. Thirdly, increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in higher education can produce benefits across society by improving the development of

culturally competent graduates to work with Indigenous peoples in the community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are greatly under-represented as employees of Australian universities at all levels. Staff numbers in the areas of teaching, research and other general positions need to increase to reach population parity. The under-representation sends a negative message to students and employees about the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within higher education and undermines some of the current employment strategies. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a valuable resource for Australian universities.

Ways to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in academia, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in curricula, include traineeships or scholarships such as those provided by the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in their Indigenous unit Nura Gili which provides a two-year traineeship program (UNSW n.d.). Universities need to develop goals and strategies that provide employment and career development advice and opportunities. The University of Melbourne has prioritised targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants for all its job vacancies and distributes this information both within the university and to the broader community (The University of Melbourne n.d.). However, universities must also be desirable employers. This might be achieved with strategies that highlight a university's cultural competence goals and outcomes such as: employment retention; where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are being represented; and how they are actively participating in the university environment.

Universities need to prioritise the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with monies dedicated to conferences, mentoring, academic writing and grant applications. Western Sydney University (2017) allocates the equivalent of 2% of each cost centre's salary budget for staff development. This ensures that Australia's most marginalised and disadvantaged group continues to be funded to progress and grow in their professional development but also enables non-Indigenous staff to be trained in areas such as cultural awareness. As well as this, funding that supports early career researchers is critical to ongoing employment success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics. Spaces such as this could be utilised to provide a varied number of skills such as in

research methodology, academic writing skills and to learn from the experiences of other researchers.

Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content within universities as well as the involvement of greater numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, and communities in university governance will provide significant improvements in several areas of the workforce. For example, it will increase the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who will perceive cultural safety in the degree as well as cultural capacity (Gunstone 2008). It will also help to produce culturally competent non-Indigenous graduates. Students across a range of disciplines will leave university to enter the workforce with a diverse range of knowledge and skills that will enable them to avoid ethnocentrism, be actively involved in self-reflection, and critically evaluate their practice. The cumulative effect would be a greater level of cultural competence in workplace environments, and culturally responsive service provision, resulting in improved mental health and wellbeing in the workforce, and improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients of these services (Rigby *et al.* 2014).

One area where this is particularly important is in the discipline of social work. The rest of this article focuses on efforts to develop and implement Indigenous curriculum frameworks in social work and allied health degrees, with some concluding comments on the relevance for employment beyond the academy.

Indigenous curriculum frameworks

The purpose of including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curricula in professional allied health degrees is to better educate students and to deliver more culturally competent health services. This has been discussed by several authors in the recent literature (Behrendt *et al.* 2012; Holland 2016). The curriculum changes that have been made in social work degrees, and the effectiveness of the new perspectives embedded within them, have yet to be researched or evaluated by social work practitioners working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, curricula reform is evidenced in several initiatives described below.

From 2002 to 2005, the Committee of Deans of Australian Medical Schools (CDAMS) undertook the CDAMS Indigenous Health

Curriculum Framework project (Phillips 2004), auditing existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health content in all medical schools across Australia and conducting stakeholder workshops. The resulting recommendations were endorsed by all the Deans of Medicine and, since 2006, all medical schools are required to include core Indigenous health content in their curricula. A study conducted by Paul *et al.* (2006) has shown that the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curricula positively changed student perceptions and increased their preparedness for, and commitment to, working for change in Indigenous health. The study also highlighted that changes to the curriculum improved Aboriginal health outcomes and promoted an increased understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Paul *et al.* 2006: 525).

Ranzijn and colleagues produced curriculum guidelines and teaching practices for incorporating Australian Indigenous content into psychology undergraduate programs (Ranzijn *et al.* 2007). The authors noted that an unanticipated outcome of the project was the need for professional development around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content among practising psychologists, in addition to education for undergraduate psychology students. This indicates a need for students to be educated in this area before entering the workforce.

Recently, within the discipline of psychology, the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP) aimed to 'investigate curricular approaches to increasing cultural competence and Indigenous participation in psychology education and training' (AIPEP n.d.). In this collaborative project, led by Professor Pat Dudgeon from the University of Western Australia, the aims were threefold, to: expand Indigenous knowledge within tertiary psychology education; increase the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander psychology students; and develop the workforce capabilities of graduate and professional psychologists working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Dudgeon *et al.* 2016).

Since 2012, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content has been part of the core curriculum in both Bachelor level and Masters qualifying social work degrees (AASW 2012). The Getting It Right Project developed a conceptual framework for the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content into social work education (Zubrzycki *et al.* 2014). While the conceptual framework developed by this project is now

regarded as an integral component of higher education, evidence is needed as to how these knowledges both inform practice and achieve outcomes within the academic environment and the broader workforce.

The Australian government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework was developed in response to *Growing Our Future: Final Report of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Project* (HWA 2011). The framework outlined the necessity for non-Indigenous health workers to understand the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and to be able to work in partnership and in culturally safe ways (DoH 2016). It aimed to 'build on and support the considerable work happening across health professions in higher education' and suggested that an 'inter-professional approach' is necessary for the successful integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content into all curricula (DoH 2016: 10). The framework also emphasised the need for creating 'shared visions and goals in education, training and professional regulation' (DoH 2016: 10) to further the goals of improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The framework provides extensive evidence-based tools and strategies for implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in curricula, and recommendations for accreditation authorities to ensure courses contain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in accordance with accreditation standards. However, there are continuing challenges in the implementation of the framework. Sivertsen *et al.* (2017) noted that challenges in delivering high quality curriculum content include increasing economic pressures in tertiary education, larger cohorts of students, and greater use of online and remote tuition. Sivertsen *et al.* (2017) also expressed a concern that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content is required but that the necessary professional development for academics in this space was absent.

Incorporating frameworks into practice: a suggested model

The importance of confident teaching staff who are able to role model appropriate communication, knowledge and skills when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is imperative to ensure students take appropriate cultural experience, knowledge and skills out

with them to the workforce (Zubrzycki *et al.* 2014). To achieve this, appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and teaching must be implemented. To implement effective and appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content into curricula, we suggest employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is necessary.

In this section we discuss a model implemented by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in 2016. The Aboriginal author of this article, who at that time was an early career academic, was appointed for one day per week for twelve months into a curricula development position to introduce and establish Indigenous curricula in Social Work, Speech Therapy, Public Health, Occupational Therapy, Psychology and Exercise Science degrees. Although these various academic schools had differently qualified undergraduates and aims, the process of embedding a curriculum was appropriate to all and a singular model was developed.

Mapping the content

Using existing accreditation standards to assist educators in understanding the necessary graduate attributes is essential when beginning the mapping process. Of course, the mapping will undergo revision as the accreditation standards are evaluated and updated. However, it provides a starting point for the ultimate objective which is an integrated and embedded approach that ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge is incorporated at all levels of education within universities.

At ACU each of the six schools assembled a curriculum change working group that defined its aims, purposes and timeframes with regard to the introduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. The schools then undertook a degree-wide mapping exercise to identify pre-existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content as well as any areas of overlap or gaps in the degrees. The schools were required to keep records and templates of the process and changes. Issues considered when undertaking this exercise included: scaffolding (ensuring concepts were explained and expanded and built upon in later years and subjects to further knowledge and skills); examining learning outcomes (or lack of); creating constructively aligned assignments and course content; examining resources utilised and if they reflected the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and lived experiences; and

ensuring professional accreditation standards and discipline-specific standards were being implemented and articulated.

After this process was completed, any resources that needed to be developed (*e.g.* budget requirements for guest lectures, staff training, development of teaching and learning resources) were identified. The schools prioritised staff support and learning so that the academics would acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence to begin the process of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content within their units. In addition, each school developed a strategy for evaluating and assessing the learning outcomes and other goals as well as the process of increasing skills and confidence levels of staff.

Governance groups were formed consisting of staff within ACU, organisations external to ACU, and Aboriginal community members, as well as representation from the Aboriginal education units based at the Canberra, Melbourne, Strathfield and Brisbane ACU campuses. ACU used a range of approaches for meetings including online, face-to-face and group/organisation/community consultation. Each meeting had Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance requires that strong connections are built and maintained by universities with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Elders and organisations to understand the local context and issues, and to allow for input and shared decision making in relation to the curriculum. Positive relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centres within universities is also recommended as an essential component of Indigenous governance. In addition, placements and internships can enable students to engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities as well as providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who intend to work in their own community after graduation. Developing relationships and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities leads to the utilisation of the ‘third space’ (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990) where new ‘knowledge, insights and understandings’ (Zubrzycki *et al.* 2014: 25) can arise. This concept suggests a way of moving beyond conceptualising Western knowledge as separate from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge. Using this intercultural space is a way for students to think critically about the complexities of the issues and ideas involved and prepares them to be more responsive in practice (HWA 2011).

Within the school of social work curriculum, each year was framed with a learning objective: *e.g.* first year students were to gain the knowledge of colonisation practices in Australia. Each learning activity then focussed on achieving this objective. If this objective needed to be evaluated during the degree, a scaffolding plan for building on knowledge and skills was developed. For example, first year students should be able to discuss what colonisation was and then, in third year, be able to discuss how this affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia. Lastly, a list of knowledge and skills the students must have at the end of each year was drawn up which contained, for example, a statement that third year students should be able to fully understand and discuss the definition of transgenerational trauma and why this affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Teaching and learning strategies

Epistemological equality ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge is equal in status to the entrenched Western models of social work and ensures collaboration with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Mutually respectful collaborations allow better outcomes in community education practice and research (Zubrzycki *et al.* 2014). However, collaboration is a process that must be respected with appropriate acknowledgements and payment or gift giving. These last two are considered as symbols of respect and a way of acknowledging the willingness of the Aboriginal person/community to share their time and valuable knowledge (RIIC n.d). Bennett *et al.* (2018: 813) state that:

applying and implementing epistemological equality means shifting from a position of optional and choice in the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum to one that is essential and integral to social work theory and practice.

There are various methods of teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curricula including: didactic lectures and seminars, guest lectures, panel presentations, cultural immersion activities, podcasts, videos, YouTube links, case studies, scenarios for discussion, media examples, and readings/literature (both fiction and non-fiction). ACU determined that it was important to locate readings/literature that were either authored by Indigenous people or which presented examples of best practice in academic writing in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander context. ACU developed reflective activities for students such as journal entries, portfolios, role playing and online forum discussions. The role-playing consisted of Aboriginal people talking about an identified issue in a video, with a non-Indigenous student rehearsing possible appropriate responses (created in consultation with local Aboriginal communities).

As part of the quest to develop resources, ACU library staff and the Aboriginal author of this article developed a library webpage.² Initially this was discipline-specific to social work, but was later developed and expanded to include Aboriginal-specific resources for other disciplines. The library webpage displays many diverse resources including links to webpages, a list of books and eBooks, and online web resources from state and national governments, research, the university, community, health services and international Indigenous peoples. This resource could be used during studies, practicum and taken out to the workplace.

Students need to be given opportunities to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities during their degree programme. Experiential learning through cultural immersion and interaction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members will provide rich and positive learning experiences from a strengths-based perspective. Students are supported to learn from these interactions and ask questions in respectful but meaningful ways (Phillips 2004). A range of different Indigenous national and international perspectives and experiences need to be presented to students to avoid stereotyping, romanticising or distorting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and to demonstrate the diversity that exists among Indigenous people and communities. One recommendation is to invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, community members, staff and organisations to have an input into the development and delivery of programs within universities (Behrendt *et al.* 2012). In this way, collaborative partnerships can become an integral part of culturally authentic and academically robust degrees (Dudgeon *et al.* 2016).

Within social work, the ACU team felt that there was a dearth of resources developed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In response to this, ACU developed a new unit of study called 'Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities'. This

² http://libguides.acu.edu.au/socialwork/ATSI_Resources

unit was developed in conjunction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics throughout Australia. The unit teaching team applied for (and received) funding to develop case studies that would be written in conjunction with a governance group that included a diverse number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewpoints. The team also decided that it was important to consider the history of different geographical locations as well as diversity of historical and cultural experiences including extended families and the stolen generations (see Phillips 2004). As part of this process, the team engaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to help develop the script for the case studies. Two video case studies, 'Harrison' and 'Kelly,' were developed using an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander director and Aboriginal actors (including an ACU social work graduate). The 'Harrison' case study is utilised to help students understand the impacts of colonisation. The 'Kelly' case study examines the non-Indigenous social worker's cultural responsiveness. The process was recorded and later published as a resource for other academics and universities to reference (Bennett *et al.* 2018).

ACU staff discussed ways to design assessment that not only met learning objectives, but also encouraged students to engage with and reflect on the content and experiences they had during the unit. In this way, ACU created transformational opportunities within assessments. Development of pre-and post quizzes, oral presentations, case study analysis and reflective essays and journals were very popular. In addition, some schools developed photography, creative writing and music as assessment options. Discussion of how these would be assessed, and by whom, was rigorous and involved Aboriginal persons throughout development and assessment. Charles Sturt University has also designed a cultural competency E-Sim learning and teaching resource (CSU 2018) that was utilised to prepare students for practicum placement. Sharing of resources discussed in this section, both within ACU and externally, is something that is still in progress, but is vital to the sustainability of true collegiality in the development of robust courses across Australia.

The initial psychology framework discussed earlier in this article (Ranzijn *et al.* 2007) suggested that the most successful strategy to teach cultural responsiveness is to include Indigenous issues not only within existing courses but also to have Indigenous cross-cultural courses. Consistent with this argument, the more recent Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP) suggests that cultural

responsiveness should be considered as an ongoing journey rather than a destination and that time and support are needed for students, educators and professionals to ‘develop and integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content into their existing worldviews’ (Dudgeon *et al.* 2016: 15). In this way, learning becomes a transformative journey.

Towards best practice curriculum

The AIPEP framework provides a conceptual model based on the 8-ways pedagogical framework developed by Dr Tyson Yunkaporta (2009). This model suggests that, at the advanced and embedded end of the spectrum, the following skills and information is taught: (i) transformative practice; (ii) creating the third space; (iii) cultural interface theory; (iv) decolonisation; (v) reflexive practice; (vi) weaving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges into psychological theory; (vii) prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges as legitimate alternatives to traditional theory and practice; (viii) partnership and immersion with communities and organisations; and (ix) long-term mutual benefit interactions.

The development of knowledge, values and skills appropriate to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations are needed to create culturally responsive graduates. To this end, ACU prioritised developing curriculum content that was essential for the development of culturally competent graduates. Concepts of race, culture and ethnicity are included in the curriculum through a discussion of the individual’s own race, culture and ethnicity and an analysis of how these may impact on their performance in practice. Notions of privilege and ‘Whiteness’ are also explored, including dissection of critical race theory and otherness. Pre-colonial and post-colonial history in Australia, and their impacts on the continued disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are considered pivotal to the development of the course.

Human rights are examined, not just as values for social workers to uphold, but also to encourage the interrogation of health and education outcomes associated with federal and state government policies. This section of the curriculum highlights epistemological equality about the need for Aboriginal cultural healing practices, cultural supervision and mentorship as well as collaborative practice. Students are encouraged to

be critically reflexive around their actions and practice and to engage in continuous life-long learning.

For this curriculum to be sustainable, staff must receive an ongoing level of support and training. Academics require opportunities to share experiences, ideas and resources. Evaluation of their learning journey can help academics assess their development and feel confident that they are addressing their own learning needs while also providing evidence of continued learning and development.

Examining creative ways to develop and continue the implementation of the curriculum is important. One such way would be to develop a specific contract whereby Aboriginal academics could record a video or tutorial that would be available throughout Australia for a specific period. In addition, online modules developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that are specific to their needs and their country could be adopted by all universities in Australia.

Field education

Many of the schools and disciplines in allied health have a component of field education. The steps ACU has taken to integrate Indigenous perspectives into field education have included: identifying stakeholders; developing field education standards; defining learning outcomes and assessment; and developing support for field educators. Identified stakeholders have included individuals from the field placement agency (clients, consumers and staff), the field educator, the student and their cohort, the university, the fieldwork teaching team and the professional body. Planning included: examining the current role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in field education; defining goals for what the discipline is aiming to achieve with graduates; and assessing what resources were needed to implement and sustain the program.

Challenges

One of the major challenges in this process was the fear held by staff that they may offend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This fear often resulted in avoidance behaviours (*e.g.* missing important meetings or deadlines, individuals declaring the work was too hard or that individuals were already too busy with other demands of work). These

issues were managed in two ways. Firstly, the Associate Dean of Health Sciences sent an email to Heads of Schools outlining the requirement for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum, making it clear that ACU was expecting the work to be started and completed within a defined time. The overt support given by senior and influential members of ACU made it clear that this development was a priority. Secondly, high quality training was provided for staff. Thirty staff members attended Indigenous Allied Health Australia's (IAHA) cultural responsiveness training at the beginning of this process in 2016 and further attendance at IAHA training sessions continues.

Universities often have short time frames to develop new policies and curricula, which can restrict consultation – in this instance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Therefore, processes can be rushed and an example of this was having only three months to consult and complete the video case studies. Fortunately, two of the staff involved in the project had existing positive work relationships with Aboriginal peoples in the communities and this made the timeframe achievable.

Conclusion

This article has aimed to discuss a process of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content into curricula initiated by ACU. Inevitably, a model is dynamic and must constantly adapt and evolve according to conditions and experiences. This model was developed by an Aboriginal academic, highlighting the need for such individuals in university positions able to undertake this work.

Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in curricula has implications for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics required to teach the subjects. Goerke and Kickett (2013: 73) identified that educators 'need to show evidence of a minimum level of awareness of the existence of Australian Indigenous knowledge systems and the ways of working of the local Indigenous people.' However, to implement effective and appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content into curricula, we suggest employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is necessary. Beyond this, perhaps the biggest requirement for successfully Indigenising the curriculum is that all academics be committed to and responsible for it. There are significant implications

beyond the academy: teaching staff who are able to role model appropriate communication, knowledge and skills when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are imperative to ensure students take appropriate competencies with them into the workforce, where they can assist in further improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It is not yet known how students, academics or others that are currently learning and teaching this content around Australia are experiencing it. This information, and its analysis, are imperative to the success of Indigenising the curriculum and therefore impacting the broader workforce positively. For this reason, the development of a comprehensive evaluation tool that can assess student and teacher experience and workplace outcomes must be a priority. It is essential that evaluation takes account of changes in the cultural responsiveness and performance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and academics, as well as their lived experiences. Evaluation should also assess the impact of the new curriculum frameworks on workplace environments within universities, their influence on service provision beyond academia and, critically, the experiences of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples requiring these services.

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Claire Morse is a Dutch/English immigrant earning her Masters of Social Work from the University of the Sunshine Coast. A former Queensland Police officer, her interests include supporting mental health in emergency personnel, trauma informed care, Aboriginal social work, and Indigenisation of social work.

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