

ISSP Post-Implementation Review

Thank you for reading through the discussion paper and for agreeing to share your views on how we can improve the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP). Please enter your comments in the empty boxes below each of the discussion questions on this template.

We are not planning on posting these comments publicly, but please let us know if you want your submission kept confidential. This way we can take extra care with your comments in case we are asked to share them. Don't share other people's private or personal information in this template.

It is best to respond to us by e-mail, attaching the completed template as a Word document. We would be happy to receive hard copies if e-mail is not convenient for you. Comments should be provided by Friday **31 August 2018** to:

- ISSP@pmc.gov.au

or by hardcopy to:

- ISSP Review
Education, Community Safety and Health Division
Indigenous Affairs Group
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
GPO Box 6500
CANBERRA ACT 2600

We will read every submission and are grateful for the time and effort you have given to helping us ensure ISSP assists even more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students succeed at university.

Respondent:	Professor Juanita Sherwood, A/Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Strategy & Services
Is this response on behalf of an organisation?	Yes, the University of Sydney
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Is your submission confidential?	No

1 Discussion Question - ISSP Review Process

1(i)	Are there any other processes or methods that the Department should include in the ISSP Review process?
No	

2.1 Discussion Questions – Preserved Scholarships

2.1(i)	Should preserved scholarships continue, as planned, until 30 June 2021?
	Yes, we believe this would be equitable.
2.1(ii)	Should the Department require providers to offer a new ISSP scholarship to preserved scholarship holders that change courses or providers?
	We would note that it is difficult to ascertain what CSP assistance a student has already received if they change providers.
2.1(iii)	Are there other improvements that could be made to preserved scholarship arrangements or information?
	No

2.2 Discussion Questions – Funding Safety Net

2.2(i)	Has the funding safety net been effective in providing a reasonable level of funding predictability to universities?
	Yes, the funding safety net has allowed for planning beyond the current financial year.
2.2(ii)	Should the funding safety net be maintained, modified or removed? (Where relevant, include suggestions for improvement)
	We believe the funding safety net should be maintained to allow for a degree of certainty in funding moving forward. This facilitates better planning and continuity of funded services and activities.

2.3 Discussion Questions – Scholarship Offer Requirement for Remote and Regional Students

2.3(i)	Is the 95% remote and regional scholarship requirement still needed?
	As noted by Sydney in the original consultation period, there appears to be an assumption that regional and remoteness is a proxy for disadvantage and we know this is not always the case. We therefore do not believe this requirement is needed.
2.3(ii)	If the scholarship requirement is retained, is the current penalty sufficient to encourage universities to continue making offers to students from remote and regional areas?
	See above.
2.3(iii)	Are there alternative mechanisms for ensuring continued support for remote and regional students that could work better?
	Often the biggest challenge for students from regional and remote areas is being away from family and country. It may be useful to explore how we can better support maintaining these connections while students are at university.

2.4 Discussion Questions – Continuity of Support Services

2.4(i)	Are there any concerns that previously provided support services have been reduced?
	No, Sydney has continued to provide the support services previously on offer and we have expanded tutorial assistance under the new Grant Guidelines.

2.5 Discussion Questions – 2017 Transitional Measures

2.5(i)	Should the transitional measures be removed as discussed at section 2.5 of the discussion paper from the Guidelines? (If not, suggest an alternative treatment)
Yes	
2.5(ii)	Are there other transitional measures you think should be reviewed? (Please list and suggest a proposed treatment)
No	

3.1 Discussion Questions – Legislation and Implementation

3.1(i)	Is the program easy to access and simple to administer? Why/Why not?
	<p>We would note that any policies developed to satisfy Clause 37 (1) of the Grant Guidelines (shown below) would need to refer to the Grant Guidelines, and this would appear to be a circular process. As a workaround approved by the Department, we developed a special Delegation of Authority to cover this expenditure and the University Delegations are made available on our website. The Commonwealth may wish to review this Clause.</p> <p>37 Policies and processes for using an ISSP Grant</p> <p>(1) Subject to these Guidelines and the Act, a <i>higher education provider</i> that receives an ISSP Grant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) establish and maintain policies and processes for using the Grant; and(b) make information about those policies and processes publicly available, including to Indigenous persons in remote areas and regional areas.
3.1(ii)	Do the ISSP Guidelines and information on the Department’s website provide sufficient information for providers to implement the program? What could be improved?
Yes	
3.1(iii)	Have students responded positively to the program?
Yes	

3.2 Discussion Questions – Provider eligibility

3.2(i)	Are these eligibility criteria resulting in positive changes at the university?
	<p>Sydney had a form of all required mechanisms in place prior to the Grant Guidelines coming into force.</p>
3.2(ii)	Are these requirements still needed? Should others be added?
No additions required.	
3.2(iii)	Do the requirements need further clarification or improvement?
	<p>We would note that the 3% Indigenous employment target required as part of the Workforce Strategy (Clause 12) in the Guidelines remains a stretch target for the University. As universities compete for the relatively small pool of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, we believe this target should be noted as aspirational in the Guidelines.</p>

3.3 Discussion Questions –Student eligibility

3.3(i)	Have providers encountered any difficulties with confirming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status? Can anything be improved?
	Sydney had a confirmation process in place prior to the Grant Guidelines coming into force.
3.3(ii)	Have students experienced difficulties in accessing the services funded under the ISSP? Why?
	Not to our knowledge.
3.3(iii)	Is it appropriate to continue supporting postgraduate students through ISSP?
	We strongly endorse the support of post-graduate students via this funding mechanism. Post-graduate students have been enthusiastic in their uptake of ITAS tutoring assistance.
3.3(iv)	Is it appropriate to continue supporting Higher Degree by Research students through ISSP?
	We endorse the support of HDR students via this funding mechanism as critical to medium term efforts to increase the number of Aboriginal people employed in the academy.

3.4 Discussion Question – Eligible and Ineligible Activities

3.4(i)	Is the mix of eligible and ineligible activities right? (If not, suggest activities that you believe should be revised, added or removed in the Guidelines).
	We believe the mix of eligible and ineligible activities is appropriate and welcome the additional flexibility provided under the Guidelines.

3.5 Discussion questions – New ISSP Scholarships

3.5(i)	Have universities made significant changes to the design and composition of their scholarship offerings from the CSP offering (e.g. total quantum, scholarship amount per student, duration, conditions)?
	We are planning to review our total scholarships offering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to identify if there are gaps that could potentially be filled by a new CSP offering.
3.5(ii)	Is there evidence that the changes have improved outcomes?
	N/A
3.5(iii)	Are ISSP Scholarships simple to administer? (If not, please recommend improvements to Guidelines or processes).
	The current requirements in Part 5 (ISSP Grant conditions (scholarships)) are quite cumbersome and require a lot of administrative time and effort. We would welcome a review of this section with the aim of streamlining and simplifying this section of the Guidelines.

3.6 Discussion Question – Tutorial Assistance

3.6(i) Have providers made changes to the level and type of tutorial support provided to students?

We have increased the number of students accessing tutorial support and now also offer ITAS to post-graduate students. They have been enthusiastic in their uptake of ITAS tutoring assistance. In addition to one-on-one or small group course-based tutorial assistance, we have also introduced a drop-in tutoring service to support all students with academic writing skills.

3.7 Discussion Questions – Indigenous Support Activities

3.7(i) Are universities offering different support services than under the ISP?

Sydney offers a wide range of support and activities, some of which are funded by the ISSP and some of which are funded by the University.

3.7(ii) Are different types of students accessing support services than previously?

As noted above, we have seen an increase in post-graduate students accessing ITAS tutorial support.

3.8 Discussion Questions – ISSP Funding Formula

3.8(i) Have there been changes in the ways that universities spend or manage Indigenous supplementary funding?

Sydney has always sought to provide the best support to students by allocating funding from all funding channels to maximise reach.

3.8(ii) Have there been changes in the ways universities spend or manage mainstream funding for Indigenous students?

See above.

3.8(iii) Are the weightings appropriate? Have the focus changed more towards outcomes? Why/why not?

While we support the focus on outcomes in the funding formula, we do not believe that the current 10% weighting for regional and remote student enrolments is equitable. As noted above, there appears to be an assumption that regional and remoteness is a proxy for disadvantage and we know this is not always the case.

Also, the regional and remote component in the funding formula includes all student study modes (on campus, online and distance education). At the very least, we would like to see counting for this component restricted to students studying on campus and not those studying online or by distance education, as the cost of distance and online education is the same regardless of where the student is from.

3.8(iv) Does the ISSP funding formula support university efforts to not only focus on enrolment, but also on student success and graduation as well as investigating strategies to connect with Indigenous students from regional and remote areas? Why/why not?

We have always believed very strongly in supporting student success and completions and agree that the focus in the funding formula should give equal weighting to these measures in addition to pure enrolment numbers. Under the ISSP funding Guidelines we have been able to introduce student support projects such as our peer mentoring program. We are also using this funding to connect with regional and remote students via our outreach programs.

It is particularly important for this student cohort that we do not set them up for failure by enrolling students who may not have the study skills to complete university study.

3.8(v) Are there any unintended consequences of the weighting composition?

It appears that there is too much emphasis on a student's home postcode in the regional and remote part of the funding formula, especially when this weighting applies to all forms of study. On campus study is far more costly than either online or distance education, and yet are weighted equally in the equation.

3.8(vi) Are some universities benefiting to a greater degree under the design of the program? Should changes be made?

This is difficult to measure in the absence of comparative ISSP funding over time, but we are concerned that the current funding places too much emphasis on a student's home postcode.

At the very least, we would like to see counting for this component of the formula restricted to students studying on campus and not those studying by distance education, as the cost of distance and online courses is the same regardless of where the student is from. This would also remove any potential incentive for providers to stream Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students into online or distance study.

3.9. Discussion Questions - Reporting

3.9(i) Are the ISSP reporting timeframes appropriate?

The data required in the Reporting Template provided to Vice-Chancellors is not always final before the performance reporting deadline which is the last working day of April. For example, verified student data for enrolments, success and completions for the reporting year was not available by the reporting deadline.

Verified data for the above KPIs is not usually available before mid-May.

It would be helpful to align this reporting date with other key Commonwealth Student Support packages in higher Education reporting such as the HEPPP reporting deadline which is 30 May.

3.9(ii) Is the reporting template simple to complete? Can it be improved?

Yes

3.9(iii) Does the ISSP reporting duplicate any other reporting the university is required to complete?

Much of this reporting is duplicated in the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy Survey.

3.9(iv) Is there any additional information that is being captured in the reporting process? Is there elements in the reporting that should no longer be included?

No
3.9(v) Is the process for reporting simple and efficient?
Yes
3.9(vi) How should 'other funds' be reported in the reporting template?
Reporting of "other funds" is fine as is.
3.9(vii) Are there other aspects of the reporting that are ambiguous? What?
No

4 Discussion Questions – Best Practice

4(i) Do you have any innovative or best practice examples of ways the ISSP has been used to improve enrolment, retention and completion for Indigenous Australians?
Our information is available in our performance reporting which are available online.
4(ii) What is the best method for sharing this information?
If all providers make their performance reporting available to everyone online, information can be freely shared. We note that some universities have this reporting behind a paywall.
4(iii) Are universities already collaborating and/or sharing best practice? How?
Universities will also be sharing information via the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy Survey.

5 Discussion Question - Other

5(i) Is there any other feedback or information the ISSP Review team needs to be aware of?
No