Central Queensland University

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It is the policy of Central Queensland University to use and encourage the use of non-sexist language.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

PROJECT OVERVIEW 3
  Background
  Australian Indigenous Student Participation in Higher Education
  The Business-CAITEC Research Project
  Why We Undertook the Project
  Setting up the Project
  The Team

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 8
  Previous Studies
  Methodology
  Research Project Groups
  Tools
  Analysis
  Ethics
  Limitations of the Project

THEMES 14
  Introduction
  Diversity
  Constructions of Business
  Purposefulness & Participation
  Teaching & Learning
  Support

CONCLUSION 30
  Implications of Research Findings for CQU Teaching and Support Practices

RECOMMENDATIONS 31
  CAITEC
    Faculty of Business
    CAITEC/Faculty of Business
    University

FURTHER RESEARCH 34

PREVIOUS REPORTING REGARDING THIS RESEARCH PROJECT 35

REFERENCES 36

APPENDIX A: Individual Interviews 37

APPENDIX B: Survey Forms 51

APPENDIX C: Focus Group 1 61

APPENDIX D: Focus Group 2 65

APPENDIX E: Consent Form 69

APPENDIX F: Principles of Operations 73
WHOSE BUSINESS IS BUSINESS?
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A recent report commissioned for the Commonwealth Government identified Australian Indigenous students as showing the greatest improvement in participation rates of all equity target groups in Australian universities since 1990. In itself this may be seen as a commendable achievement. However, statistics suggest that this particular group of students appear to perform at a lower level than other students and are less inclined to undertake postgraduate studies. Since 1987, staff at Central Queensland University (CQU) have also noted that the percentage of Indigenous students who commence and successfully complete studies in the Business discipline is very low (less than 20%). CQU has a reputation for putting students first and for many years have had a support system (Capricornia Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Education Centre) in place to assist this group of students. This in turn raised the question as to where the system was breaking down with this group of students.

This paper looks at the research undertaken in an attempt to identify factors that prevent full-time Australian Indigenous students from successfully progressing through the Bachelor of Business. A diverse research team was established to undertake the research. Over a period of two years the research team worked on two complementary projects. As one of these projects involved action learning it meant the entire approach to the research was continuously evaluated and modified to ensure the best results in an area of research that has not always been handled well in the past.

The aim of the project was to identify real factors rather than perceived factors. The only way to do this successfully was to speak to the actual people involved. All Australian Indigenous students who had enrolled in a Business degree in the past ten years were contacted. They were asked to give their views on aspects such as their background; leaving their community; their university preparation; the teaching and learning environment at CQU and the support provided by the CQU. Contact ranged from personal interviews, surveys, and telephone interview to focus groups.

From an analysis of the results, several themes emerged. These themes included Diversity, Construction of Business, Purposefulness and Participation, Teaching and Learning, and Support. These themes were further analysed in light of the students' views. This analysis has considerable implications for CQU Teaching and Support Practices. There is no doubt that the experience these students have in first year has considerable impact on any future study they undertake. If future plans involve the integration of these students into the Business discipline, the recommendations of this paper need to be considered carefully. In many instances these recommendations will translate successfully across both universities and disciplines.

The paper concludes with some very specific recommendations for the CQU as a whole, the Faculty of Business and Capricornia Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Education Centre (CAITEC). Many of these recommendations can be implemented immediately while others will take longer to establish. If the recommendations described in this report were fully implemented, there is little doubt this would have a positive impact on the university experience of Australian Indigenous students.
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Background

Since its inception, Central Queensland University (CQU) has established a reputation as a caring university. CQU is innovative in its approach to course development and delivery, and in meeting its objective to do what is best for the student. The CQU vision statement illustrates this approach to teaching and development:

In developing partnership, the University will demonstrate quality, social responsibility and relevance in its programs of teaching research and community service which will be recognised for their excellence by national and international communities.

CQU is an emerging university with faculties which encompass the disciplines of arts, applied sciences, business, communications, education, engineering, health sciences, informatics and tourism. CQU evolved from a College of Advanced Education and from its inception there has been a strong emphasis on quality teaching. Staff throughout the university are very concerned with teaching and with carrying out research to improve teaching practices.

The Faculty of Business is one of the largest faculties at CQU with approximately 1200 students on-campus (1997). While the student body consists mainly of Australian students, the Faculty has attracted an ever-increasing number of international students. Within the Faculty of Business, students can study accounting, information systems, management, human resources management, marketing, or purchasing and materials management. The Faculty is committed to teaching and research of a high standard, and to ensuring that business graduates have a sound knowledge base and an awareness of professional expectations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students (hereinafter referred to as Australian Indigenous students) have been enrolled in business courses at CQU over a number of years. Support for the Australian Indigenous students at CQU is provided by the Capricornia Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Education Centre (CAITEC) which is an established Division of the University. CAITEC seeks to achieve more equitable access, entry and participation of Australian Indigenous peoples in CQU award courses and in the full range of University activities.

Within CQU and the wider community, CAITEC provides a focus on the culture, history, education and contemporary issues of Australian Indigenous peoples. CAITEC's activities of student resourcing, research, curriculum development, teaching and training, both within the university and in the wider community, provide opportunities in a holistic context for Australian Indigenous peoples to access tertiary knowledge and to be successful at tertiary educational level.

Australian Indigenous Student Participation in Higher Education

A recent report commissioned for the Commonwealth Government [NBEET 1996] identified Australian Indigenous students as showing the greatest improvement in participation rates of all the equity target groups in Australian universities since 1990. However, the pass rates for Australian Indigenous students are much lower than for other students, and once they have left university, these students have been identified as being less likely to re-enrol in subsequent years. To understand the factors related to this, it is
necessary to briefly look at the history of educational provision for Australian Indigenous students in tertiary institutions.

Since the mid-1970s, Australian Indigenous students have been encouraged to attend university through a range of assimilationist initiatives such as special entry provisions, supportive study contexts, and programs to enhance cultural identity [Shafitan 1994/5]. These initiatives, for the most part, have been funded in varying ways through special funding to universities from the Commonwealth Government. However, the success rates of Australian Indigenous students have, for the most part, been impacted upon by the inability of most universities (until very recent times) to make any real attempts to change the university organisational and academic culture into which these students were entering. Thus such students had to adopt what Malezer refers to as the “sink or swim” approach [Malezer 1992]. Malezer argues that if an Indigenous person wished to maintain their own cultural identity and participate in university, it was most likely that they would ‘sink’. However, if they chose to ‘swim’, then this was probably done so (in most instances) at the price of one’s cultural identity.

Recent Commonwealth initiatives [NBEET 1996] now make it very clear that the retention and success of Australian Indigenous students is the responsibility of the university as a whole. Universities will need to move towards a systemic approach whereby the culture of the university itself is explored, so as to identify and rectify those practices which impact on the participation and success of Australian Indigenous students and other equity groups [NBEET 1996].

In the past, Australian Indigenous tertiary students have tended to congregate in discipline areas such as education and welfare. However, this has slowly been changing and there has been a move for these students to study in some of the less traditional disciplines such as business and applied science [DEET 1995]. While it is encouraging to see the breadth of chosen disciplines increasing, at present in Australia the group of Indigenous students in tertiary institutions is still comparatively small. The current figures for Australian Indigenous students studying at the tertiary level in Australia are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Commencing</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Queensland University</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Cook University</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld University of Technology</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Queensland</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Southern Qld</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland – Total</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>1379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>1020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Catholic University</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3624</td>
<td>6956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(DDETYA 1996, pp.96-97)
The Business-CAITEC Research Project

While the participation rate of Australian Indigenous students in higher education has increased by 48% since 1991 [NBEET 1996], the overall participation is still below population share. In addition, the 1994 data of Australian Indigenous success and retention shows that these are well below those of non-Indigenous students [NBEET 1996]. This highlights the fact that any research carried out with an aim to improving this situation has to be positive, and is thus a real incentive for researchers interested in this area.

To understand the significance of the project undertaken, it is necessary to look at the direction in which issues of equity in Australian higher education have been addressed in the last six years. Prior to 1991, efforts to increase the numbers of Australian Indigenous peoples enrolled in tertiary institutions were attended to with specific funding distributed to universities for initiatives to increase Australian Indigenous placements. However, the Commonwealth Government’s “A Fair Chance For All: Higher Education That’s Within Everyone’s Reach” statement (1990) ‘mainstreamed’ the funding of Australian Indigenous students in higher education. The “A Fair Chance for All” policy defined the inclusion of certain groups, including Indigenous peoples in higher education, within an equity framework. The individual was seen to have lacks or deficits in characteristics based on their membership of a targeted group. This policy therefore attempted to develop strategies directed at changing the individual’s skills, preparedness or attitude. This approach to education and learning is described as the deficit model.

It is necessary to move away from this deficit model, and take a more careful look at what is happening in universities in this area. The need for a shift in focus from the individual to the system can be seen in the revised manner in which Commonwealth support for Australian Indigenous students in universities is based not only on universities meeting negotiated student targets, but also on the success of students in the programs. This follows a review of support funding for Australian Indigenous students in tertiary institutions [Ham 1996] which recommended that 80% of Indigenous support funds be based on meeting negotiated targets for student EFTSU and 20% of support funds be based on institutions’ relative performance in relation to strategies to improve student outcomes. This latter 20% is assessed on the basis of the institutional Aboriginal Education Strategies as contained in CQU’s Education Profile submission to the Department of Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs.

Why We Undertook the Project

At CQU, the number of Australian Indigenous students entering Bachelor of Business courses has gradually increased over the past seven years. Table 2 shows a breakdown of enrolment statistics of Australian Indigenous business students at CQU from 1990 to 1996. This table looks at the students in terms of gender and entry level into the University.

Table 2: Commencing Australian Indigenous Students in CQU Business Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-leaver</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature-aged</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two factors that are evident from these statistics may provide the basis for further research. First, Australian Indigenous Business enrolments have undergone a complete gender reversal, in that, over the six years there has been a move from twice as many males to twice as many females seeking entry to courses. Second, the ratio of school-leaver to mature-aged students has also been reversed.

Setting up the Project

Early in 1995, the Faculty of Business was approached by CAITEC staff; the latter expressed concern about the failure rates of Australian Indigenous students in first year business units which were far higher than the failure rates for Indigenous students in other faculties. The overall failure rate for first year business units generally lies between 12% and 48%. However, the failure rate for Australian Indigenous students in first year units for the three years leading up to the commencement of the project was between 70% and 80% (See Table 3).

Table 3: Australian Indigenous Students - First Year Unit Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passed</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CAITEC and Business staff were keen to consider what joint collaborative approaches could be taken to address the problem. The failure rate was only one issue with this group of students. An additional problem was the overall retention/attrition rate. Table 4 outlines the retention/attrition of Australian Indigenous students in the CQU Bachelor of Business course over the period 1990-1996. During this period, 94 students commenced business studies at CQU. A large portion of these students left either in, or at the end of, their first year. Students who came back after failing their first year were generally unsuccessful the second time around (90% failed at their second attempt). An analysis of the cohort of Australian Indigenous students who enrolled in CQU business courses during the period 1990 to 1996 shows that during this time, only four of those who enrolled during this time have actually graduated to date (See Table 4).

Table 4: Cohort Analysis of CQU Australian Indigenous Students’ Business Degree Enrolments, Retention/Attrition, Progression and Graduation Statistics for the Period 1990 to 1996*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Students</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left during first year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left at end of first year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned at end of first year but did not complete</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still studying business</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred to other course</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Does not include those students who enrolled prior to 1990 but were still studying at some time during the period 1990 to 1996.

† Table compiled in August 1996 so may not accurately show attrition of students during the latter half of 1996.
Faculty of Business and CAITEC staff initially held an informal meeting to discuss the possibilities of conducting research into this problem. At the meeting, a group of interested participants was established, with an aim to carry out research to identify factors that impact on Australian Indigenous students progressing through the Bachelor of Business course. The innovative nature of this cross-cultural collaboration led to the establishment of an action learning project which would investigate the various approaches and relevant issues in relation to conducting cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary research. The team viewed these two projects as complementary with methodology in Project One being dependent to a large degree on the outcomes of Project Two (See Figure 1). Project Two – the Action Learning – enabled the research team to critically reflect upon and review the methodology of Project One – Business Research. Through this process of critical reflection and discussion, changes were implemented in the Business Research project. Some of these changes included the introduction of focus groups, revision of the research tools and overall progress of the research. A separate report on the Action Learning Project is available.

Figure 1: Relationship of the Two Research Projects

The Team

The research team originally consisted of seven members. These members provided a combination of genders (five females and two males), disciplines (three from CAITEC and four from Business), and positions (six academics and one general staff member). One team member was an Australian Indigenous CQU researcher who herself was a graduate of the CQU Bachelor of Business course (See Table 5).

Table 5: Details of Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Faculty/Department</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robyn Alcock</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyn Anderson</td>
<td>CAITEC</td>
<td>Research and Curriculum Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Baker</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Manager, Course Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil Field</td>
<td>Student Association</td>
<td>Student Advocate (formerly with CAITEC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo Luck</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Lecturer in Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare Stehens</td>
<td>CAITEC</td>
<td>Research and Curriculum Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth Tennent</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Lecturer in Accounting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All team members brought to the research project a concern with, and commitment to, the issue of the progression of Indigenous students, as well as a good deal of expertise from various areas. However, within a short time, it was realised that as emerging researchers, there would be a need for the research team to collaborate with others if the project was to be completed successfully. People who provided valuable input to the project included:

- Marie Brennan (Faculty of Education)
- Professor Kevin Fagg (Faculty of Business)
- Lyn Nichols (CAITEC)
- Alison Plurnrner (Research Officer, Faculty of Business) and
- Ian Whelan (CAITEC Adviser, seconded from the Faculty of Education).

The first real research issue encountered by the research team was thus. As persons experienced in working with Australian Indigenous students, ‘everyone knew why these students were not progressing’; there was, therefore, a danger of jeopardising the whole project if the project design did not allow students to voice their perceptions and understandings of what was happening. It was agreed that if the project was to be successful, the preferred approach to take was to actually speak with the students themselves. As the population of Australian Indigenous Business students at CQU is quite small, it was decided to include all Australian Indigenous students who had been enrolled in Bachelor of Business course at CQU since 1984 in the project.

Another issue recognised in the early stages of the project was that, in the light of the complexity of issues, it could prove difficult to pinpoint exactly where students encountered problems through a ‘one-off’ project. The potential problems encountered by students could be located in several possible areas, including (to name a few) teaching in business, support services, living arrangements, or CAITEC. If this was the case, the team thus identified a need to continue to monitor these students over a period of time to determine whether or not there were events or factors that changed during their lead up to university and while they were attending university. Therefore, as a follow on to the research project, those Australian Indigenous students who first enrolled in CQU Business courses in 1996 now form the basis of a cohort, which continues to be the focus of ongoing monitoring and support by the Faculty of Business and CAITEC.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Previous Studies

Before starting this research project early in 1995, several Australian Indigenous support units throughout Australia were approached to ascertain if they had conducted any studies to assess the progression and retention rates for Australian Indigenous students enrolled in business courses at their respective universities. This revealed a dearth of research about this group of students. Some reports that were identified included a study conducted at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) which produced a general paper on the differences in values between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Aboriginal Australian students [Fogarty & White 1994]. A Masters student at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is exploring the retention and progression rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for all courses in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled at QUT. It was expected that this thesis will have been completed by late 1996.
Finally, a study conducted by Tangi Steen at the University of South Australia analysed the progression and retention rates of Australian Indigenous students in their Bachelor of Aboriginal Administration course. This was to be completed late in 1995.

While there is a body of published research in the access and equity arena, and a small but growing amount of literature on the participation of Australian Indigenous people in higher education, there is very little research that is discipline specific. Most research is about Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Studies, or other social sciences and humanities. In business, apart from pioneering project work (as discussed above), we as yet know of no published work of the kind we have undertaken. We expect that this work will be amongst the first making the connection from the more general issues of Australian Indigenous participation in tertiary education to the world of business in higher education.

Methodology

The main focus of the Business Research Project was to investigate the factors that impact upon the progress of first year Australian Indigenous students in the Bachelor of Business course. It was important to investigate the factors that helped the progress of these students as well as the factors that impeded the progression of the students.

Through the project methodology, the research team was concerned about capturing the students' voices as a means of providing a space for their perspectives on the issues of participation in higher education in general, and the Bachelor of Business course in particular.

Initially there were to be two different approaches to this study:

- looking at students who are no longer in first year - either they have graduated, progressed in their course, changed their enrolment to a different course or dropped out, and;
- establishing the 1996 intake of Australian Indigenous students into the Bachelor of Business course as a cohort group for a longitudinal study.

This latter group would be interviewed before they enrolled, after they enrolled but before classes had started, and at the completion of Semester 1.

Thus, the project consisted of two separate aspects:

1. Interviewing or surveying all CQU Australian Indigenous Business students since 1984. These students included:
   - students who first enrolled in 1995
   - all continuing students in 1995
   - students who in 1995 had withdrawn from the course
   - students who in 1995 had deferred their studies, and
   - all graduates and other people who were no longer enrolled.

2. Longitudinal cohort study: This involved structured oral interviews in November 1995 of potential 1996 student enrolments for the Bachelor of Business. These interviews were conducted when these students visited the University for alternative entry selection processes. Students from this group were interviewed again in Week 2 of Semester 1, 1996; that is, after they had completed Orientation Week and two full weeks of lectures. The final interview with this group was at the end of Week 2 in Semester 2, 1996, when all students had completed one semester of study at CQU and had received their results.
Research Project Groups

To make the project manageable it was undertaken within the following parameters:

1. The definition of an Australian Indigenous student as a student who had entered on their university enrolment form that they were either an Australian Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander.

2. A limitation of Australian Indigenous students studying the Bachelor of Business course on the Rockhampton campus of CQU who were enrolled at the time of the research (1995).

3. The separation of students to four groups:
   - Group 1 – Cohort Group (1996 intake)
   - Group 2 – Enrolments in the Bachelor of Business for the first time in 1995
   - Group 3 – Students enrolled in the Bachelor of Business who commenced prior to 1995
   - Group 4 – Students who had enrolled in the Bachelor of Business prior to 1995 and who were no longer enrolled.

**Group 1:** Cohort group - it was planned to follow this group over a period of time. These were students who were not in the system yet, but were planning to come to university in 1996. There were nine students initially in this cohort group.

Interviewing of the cohort group commenced in November 1995. It was decided that one-on-one structured interviews should be used. The research team developed the questions and two experienced Indigenous research assistants were engaged to conduct the interviews. It was planned to conduct further interviews with this group in February 1996 (after the orientation experience) and then in July 1996 (after the first semester was completed). However, when the second round of interviews were carried out in February 1996 only two of the original nine had accepted places in the Bachelor of Business at CQU. These students were then joined by other Australian Indigenous students who commenced their business course at CQU in 1996, even though they had not attended interviews in November 1995.

**Group 2:** This was the group of students who had enrolled in the Bachelor of Business for the first time in 1995 and were studying internally full-time on the Rockhampton campus. There were six students in this group who were invited to participate in the research. With this group of students it was decided to interview them towards the end of their first year, in 1995. All six students in this group were interviewed.

**Group 3:** All students currently enrolled in Business as internal full-time students who had started prior to 1995. Once again it was decided to interview this group towards the end of 1995. These students were in their second or third year of study at CQU in 1996. There were five students in this group but only four participated in the interviews.

**Group 4:** All students who had enrolled in the Bachelor of Business since 1984 but who were no longer enrolled. This group of 80, included students who had dropped out of the system or transferred to another faculty or who had graduated. Due to the cost of personal or telephone interviewing, it was decided to survey this group using a written structured survey questionnaire. Eighty letters were sent out initially and four weeks later the mail out was repeated. Only twelve students responded (15%). One of the factors in this small response was the difficulty in locating ex-students’ current addresses.
Tools

Three major tools were used for data collection – oral individual interviews, written survey questionnaires and focus groups (See Appendices A to D). Individual interviews were used for the first interview for Group 1 as well as to gather data from Groups 2 and 3. Two female Australian Indigenous people conducted the interviews. During the interviews one person asked the questions and the other noted the students’ responses. Neither of these interviewers were part of the research team but were employed by the research team on a part-time basis. These interviews were taped and the transcripts of these interviews were typed later by the interviewers.

After analysis and discussion of the data gathered from the interviews with Groups 1, 2 and 3, the research team was concerned at the narrowness of the data collected. They decided to run the two remaining interviews for the cohort group as focus groups. The research team was concerned that in the interview process; that the students may have felt uncomfortable about being put “under the gaze” [Foucault 1977] of the interviewers and that this may have limited their responses. Hence, the research team elected to use focus groups which would allow the research participants to be a part of a group and not feel that they have to ‘perform’ for the interviewers. A group situation also had the advantage of allowing peer interaction amongst the group and the sharing and reinforcing of comments and ideas.

The first focus group interview was held in Week 2 of Semester 1. This allowed the interviewers to explore how the students' attitudes had changed since their initial interviews. Also they were asked to comment on their experiences during Orientation Week and the first two weeks of the semester. The second focus group was conducted in Week 2 of Semester 2. The main focus of this interview was to gauge students' experiences in their first semester of study in the Bachelor of Business course.

These focus group interviews were set up in the Educational Media Services studio at CQU, so that all the participants could wear radio-microphones or talk into a microphone. These focus groups were run by two people in the research team, both of whom were female. One interviewer was an Australian Indigenous person and the other was a lecturer who had taught first year Accounting in the past but was not currently teaching first year Accounting. Hence the students did not feel pressured into participating by a lecturer in charge of a unit they were currently studying. A phone interview was conducted some weeks later to get comments from one of the first year students who had left to return to work in their home community.

The focus groups appeared to have been successful with the first year students. The students commented that they had felt really comfortable and they opened up to the interviewers. The interviewers felt that the students were more comfortable talking in a group, whereas the one-on-one interview style had put them too much under the 'spotlight'. Also, as some of the students had been participating in the project since November 1995, they knew the research team better and felt they were talking to people they knew, rather than to strangers. Each of the focus group discussions was preceded by informal morning tea gatherings to encourage the participants to mix with, and be at ease with, the research team.

The written surveys for Group 4 were mailed to potential participants as they were spread throughout the country. It would have proved very difficult to bring them to Rockhampton for an interview. Individual telephone interviews would have been expensive, time-consuming and difficult to organise. After an initial poor response to the
survey mail-out, a reminder was sent with another copy of the survey. It should be noted that approximately one-quarter of the surveys were returned to the university unopened, marked 'return to sender', as the recipient had left the address given on the student records system.

Analysis

The analysis of the data was done in two ways. There was a vertical analysis of each group where all the answers to the same questions were studied and similarities and differences and other points of interest were noted. This was followed by a horizontal analysis where similarities and differences between the groups were studied. In both analyses the significance of what information was in the data and the significance of what was not in the data was investigated. It took several passes through the data to pick up the complexity of nuances within the material. During the analysis phase, several themes emerged and were named from the data. These themes are covered in the next section of this report.

It was the nature of the research team approach, because of the interrelation of the Action Learning Project and the Business Project, that the learning that occurred during the course of the project became part of the analysis and interpretation of the data. An example of how the research methodology changed as a reflection of experience, was the changing of the primary research instrument from a one-on-one interview to a focus group setting.

Ethics

While CQU has a Human Research Ethics Policy, it does not have a specific ethics policy relating to research with Australian Indigenous peoples. Hence, to prepare its ethical clearance submission to the CQU's Human Ethics Review Panel, the research team chose to abide by the "Guidelines on Ethical Matters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research" produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council. As part of these guidelines, the research team was required to demonstrate Indigenous community support for the project. This was done by obtaining a letter of support from the CAITEC Management Committee and a letter of support from the Manager of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit, Department of Education, Employment and Training, Rockhampton office. These letters indicated to CQU's Human Ethics Review Panel that the research would be potentially useful to the Australian Indigenous community and would be conducted in a way that was sensitive to the cultural and political situation of the community.

All research participants were given a letter of consent to sign. The letter of consent explained the title and nature of the project, that the data would only be used for this research project and that the participants' permission would be required if the information was to be accessed for any other purpose. It was also explained on the consent form that the research project had no influence on the student's academic standing within the University. Participants were advised that they could withdraw at any time from the research project by giving written or verbal notification to either of the principal investigators. This information was verbally explained to all participants before they signed the consent form (See Appendix E).

Limitations of the Project

Due to the limited nature of similar research of this type in Australia, the research team had to 'invent' methodology as the project progressed. This was compounded by the fact
that with the exception of the mentor and the research officer, the team members were all emerging researchers. Some of the issues that the research team faced in the research were:

i) Processes of communication in a large group:
   The research team was quite a large group, members of which had heavy work commitments and other duties. This sometimes made it difficult to find suitable times to meet and to allow everyone to be heard. As the research progressed, the team tended to ‘shoot off on tangents’ very easily. Sometimes it was difficult to keep focused on the original task. The research team developed a set of Principles of Operations that attempted to address some of these issues (See Appendix F).

ii) The interview methods and the training of the research assistants:
   The research assistants were both female Indigenous people, who were chosen as they were seen to be non-threatening to the students. They both adopted an informal and interactive mode of communication with the research participants. However, there were limitations to the interview process, as the students felt they were being put ‘under the gaze’ through the individual interviewing process. Also, as the research assistants who did the interviews were not active research team members, sometimes important issues arose that were not followed-up in subsequent interviews, because the research assistants continued to follow the original questions that the research team had set out for the interviews.

iii) Opportunity for research participants to contribute:
   While the focus group was used to overcome the limitations of the interview process, some students may have felt that they were not given equal time in the focus groups. However, all the first year students did feel they benefited from this study as they had someone to talk to about issues that arose at CQU. Even though there are a number of unique issues when researching Indigenous people, the team has to acknowledge that all of these aspects were not addressed.

iv) The limited nature of the written surveys:
   The written surveys used with Group 4 were limited, as there was no opportunity to go back and question the participants on their comments. Finding the issues was difficult with this particular group, as they were very diverse in their location, experience and the length of time away from CQU. The response rate for surveys was small at approximately 15%. This may have been due to people’s reluctance to fill out forms and also the difficulty of finding current addresses for many of the past students.

v) Research focused on students’ perspectives:
   The team did not interview lecturers or other staff to gain their views on the participation of various cultural groups in their classes. While the focus of the research was on students’ perspectives, lecturers may also have been able to share insights on the teaching methods found to have assisted the students’ learning in their classes.

As with any qualitative research, there are limitations with the amount of data that may be gathered and the interpretation and analysis of that data depends on the research team’s own experiences, culture, education and research experience.


**THEMES**

Introduction

The research analysis highlighted a multitude of factors that impacted on the progression of Australian Indigenous students who studied in the Faculty of Business. However, by analysing these diverse aspects of Australian Indigenous students’ participation in the business studies – in terms of family background, educational and employment background, academic progress and support – the researchers were able to construct five themes that attempted to capture the multitude of factors that were relevant to or impacted on the way in which Australian Indigenous peoples accessed and participated in business studies at CQU.

While the themes – Diversity, Construction of Business, Purposefulness and Participation, Teaching and Learning and Support – were the result of the researchers’ interpretation of the commonalities across the data, they are based on and represent the voices of the Australian Indigenous students. As such, primacy is given to the students’ voices which inform the presentation of each of the themes.

Diversity

As stated earlier, Australian Indigenous peoples’ enrolments in business courses at CQU have gradually increased. However, in using the description ‘Australian Indigenous’ to refer to the students as a group, it is inappropriate to homogenise or racialise them in ways whereby a construction of culture as artefact stereotypes and defines the individual. For the purposes of this report, the term ‘Australian Indigenous peoples’ is used to represent the pan-national identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands peoples but it does not deny the diversity and distinction within Australian Indigenous cultures. This project has sought to move beyond colonial constructions of Australian Indigenous peoples to acknowledge cultural, social and economic diversity.

Those Australian Indigenous peoples who are or have studied business at CQU illustrate that diversity by representing:

- differing Indigenous nations across Queensland
- differing geographic locations
- differing educational and employment experiences
- differing social and economic status
- differing expectations about their participation at tertiary education, and
- differing outcomes in terms of post-study employment and future careers.

In this research report, it is important to acknowledge the cultural diversity within the research group even though it was not an area the interviewees were questioned about.

The diversity of culture that is being referred to can be understood as each individual person having the freedom to operate from their own cultural paradigm within what we refer to as “Selected Cultural Paradigm”. Within Australian Indigenous identification, the “Selected Cultural Paradigm” reflects a positive positioning of culture as dynamic, and incorporates selected societal influences e.g. religion, economic status, geographic location, education, media etc. Identity for these people is not about *how* one identifies oneself, which is usually associated with practising certain cultural heritage practices of the past, but with *what one identifies with*. This is about a sense of one’s self within the Australian...
Indigenous frame of reference. Thus, identity may not be visible in the common-place ways that are often recognised such as the colour of skin or the capacity to perform traditional dances, but more connected to a sense of self as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander/Indigenous or by terms such as Koori/Murri/etc.

Identification of the cultural-self and its relevance for Indigenous people today is appropriately described by an Aboriginal elder, Neville Bonner, who described culture thus:

"Culture is not only a matter of boomerangs spears and bark paintings. It could be described as a way of thinking and relating common to a certain group of people. It gives them a set of value judgements which guide their conduct. It decides their relationships with people, their attitudes to possession, to time, to success, death, family etc. Aboriginality is not the colour of one’s skin, but a state of mind."

Contrary to the stereotypical ways in which they have been portrayed, there is no essential characteristic or practice that unites all Australian Indigenous peoples other than their identity as the Indigenous peoples of this land. However, it is more likely that social indicators such as poor health, exclusion from appropriate education, high incarceration rates, high infant mortality rates and lower life expectancy, rather than their Indigenous cultural identity, which will be the factors that are more likely to impact on Australian Indigenous peoples accessing and participating in university.

It is not surprising that the diversity of Australian Indigenous students is not recognised when the numbers of Australian Indigenous peoples are so few overall. Moreover, universities, in the ways in which they have historically constructed knowledge, have contributed to the ‘otherness’ and homogenising of Australian Indigenous peoples, by making them the objects of study rather enabling them to be participants in the creation of university culture and practices. CQU is no exception to this.

To highlight the degree of diversity within the research group it was noted that:

- there were eleven mature-aged students (six females and five males) and twenty-five school-leavers (fifteen females and ten males)
- the majority of students came from outside the Central Queensland region and had to leave their home towns, located in the Darling Downs, Far North Queensland, North Queensland, South-West Queensland and the Brisbane metropolitan regions, to study at CQU. The group thus represented a host of Indigenous nations or ‘countries’.
- some of these students had completed Grade 12 at secondary school; others had not.

These factors are highlighted in the following Figures 2 to 6.
Figure 2: Gender Statistics of the Groups Interviewed

Figure 3: Age Statistics of the Student Groups

Figure 4: Statistics on School-leavers versus Mature-aged Entry Students
Figure 5: Statistics on the Completion of Grade 12

![Bar chart showing statistics on Grade 12 completion by number of students.

Figure 6: Statistics on Students Who Had to Leave their Home Community

![Bar chart showing statistics on students leaving home community by number of students.

*Legend for Groups*
1(a) - Potential students who planned to commence in 1996
1(b) - Students who commenced in 1996
2 - Students who commenced in 1995
3 - Students who commenced prior to 1995
4 - Students who commenced prior to 1995 and were no longer enrolled

The research team was also aware that this group of students represents differing marital and family status such as married or single and sole parents. Questioning in relation to marital status was not carried out either in the interviews or on the survey forms so there is no researched data profiling student marital status and family responsibilities. However, general anecdotal evidence provided by the interviewees, illustrated the diversity of marital and family situations of respondents:

"The only problem I've got is I'm a sole parent and I'm still living with my parents. So what I've got to do is arrange for ... basically first of all, I've got to settle in with my studies. Before I can bring him down, I've got to settle in and get some rhythm going with my studies ......." [mature-aged student, male]

The age, gender, home community and family factors as described do not represent the full extent of the diversity within the research group. School experience differed for students -
some found the experience enjoyable while others found it far from satisfactory. It would appear that the more recent students coming to university believed that they had benefited most from their schooling in terms of university preparation. More and more students entering business courses have completed 12 years of formal schooling. Some of the students had completed subjects such as accounting, economics and legal studies in high school, which they thought would directly assist them in studying business at university. There appeared to be a marked improvement on the perceived preparation of recent school-leavers in comparison with some of the mature-aged students.

Work experience was another area of diversity. Some students had spent considerable time in the work force prior to entering university. In some cases students were involved in work relating to business and it was felt that this provided students with some of the generic skills which would be useful in business. A few of the school-leaver students had limited work experience. For some students, their only work experience was that organised as part of their high school curriculum. In one instance, a negative work experience actually provided the student with increased motivation to study business.

"... they wouldn't recommend I go into accounting as an area. How can they tell in one week when you do a stocktake just counting, using a calculator. That is what I thought. But I've always wanted to do accounting so that's just tough." [school-leaver, female]

Future expectations both in relation to what university would offer, and also in terms of careers, appeared to be dependent on numerous factors. Some students were quite specific with their plans. The following comment was made by a mature-aged female who had completed a university introductory course and participated in work experience very closely related to business.

"... My husband and I have a long-term goal. It is gonna take three years to finish this course. I'd like to be in the workforce doing marketing management, so I've got that background skills and then hopefully we can get a loan from the bank to buy our own business." [mature-aged student, female]

However, a comment from a male school-leaver with limited work experience was:

"Yeah. I want to own my own business. I've got a four-year plan. Finishing off my degree in three years, making my first million in the first year." [school-leaver, male]

There didn't appear to be any definite pattern with expectations. In many instances mature-aged students appeared to be more focused than school-leavers. This generally appears to be the case with mature-aged students, which suggests it is more age-specific rather than culture-specific.

Constructions of Business

The steady increase in enrolments of Australian Indigenous students in business studies at CQU as highlighted in Table 4 indicates that business is a field of study that is attracting an increasing enrolment of Australian Indigenous peoples. For some students within the research group, this was explained by the fact that business knowledge is seen as a necessity for them in their efforts towards self-determination and/or enhanced quality of life.

"...Also, there is not a lot of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders that do business. It is going to be an asset to our people." [mature-aged, male]
(For further discussion of students’ motivations to study business – see Purposefulness and Participation below.)

However, in the light of these motivations for entering Bachelor of Business courses, the students who participated in the research identified that:

- neither they nor members of their families had employment experience in business-type work except for two mature-aged students, one of whom had managed a TAB and the other had worked in an administrative role in an Aboriginal community organisation
- few family members of the students had undertaken business studies at a TAFE or university; and
- approximately only 10% of school-leaver students had studied business-related subjects at school.

The question here for the research team is the effect of these minimal real-life employment, schooling or family experiences of ‘business’ in creating unrealistic perceptions of business education and the business world. An example of one student’s understanding of the meaning of business:

“Yeah, I want to own my own business. I’ve got a four-year plan. Finishing off my degree in three years, making my first one million dollars in the first year” [school-leaver, male]

Furthermore, students comments about what they thought it would be like to study business before they came to CQU highlight the lack of congruence between their own family and schooling background, and the actual prerequisites required in studying business:

“Had an idea” [school-leaver, female]

“More practical on the job style of training....” [mature-aged, male]

“I didn’t really know...” [school-leaver, female]

“I thought it would be more about general administration” [mature-aged, female]

In light of these comments it is important to problematise and address Australian Indigenous students’ expectations of their course of study in terms of their own constructions of what constitutes business and how to incorporate this within mainstream university business courses.

On the whole, business courses at Australian universities are based on contemporary management, bureaucratic and accountability models, and practices that have evolved from the interweave of classical, behavioural and management scientific theories, constructed within western sociological frameworks. Industrialisation, capitalism and colonialism, were the motivating forces of these models. Therefore, the appropriateness of these models and others that have since been introduced, has been based on the assumption that the hegemonic structures of western cultures would be entrenched within all facets of social, political and economic frameworks. The application of such models within the pedagogical context, such as university business courses, not only reflects mainstream and/or western thought but also can appropriate and dilute the cultural and ethnic diversity of those participating within this context. This may exclude opportunities for different perspectives and principles, and alternative ways of ‘doing business’ being considered in these courses. For many Australian Indigenous peoples, the effect may be seen as assimilating participants to a ‘western’ way of being, because of the institution’s
failure to recognise the cultural specificity of its own construction and the subsequent lack of recognising and offering appropriate alternatives and world views.

Australian Indigenous world views and the cultural and community obligations which students express are not always acknowledged and valued within Business academic discourse. For example, and without wanting to homogenise Australian Indigenous cultures, these students represent cultural values such as sharing and caring, looking after one's own and collective action which in a western business sense may not be appreciated and may even be seen as contravening organisational policies.

The effect of this, according to one Australian Indigenous female school-leaver, is that despite her strong desire to become an accountant, she felt isolated within the business course because she was not part of that construction of what it is to study business. She described her experience thus:

"The bloody students at 17 years of age walked around as though they already were managers and accountants. Terribly competitive, cold, unfriendly, lacking compassion, commonsense, life skills, poor bastards. It is no wonder the business world lacks social justice. As a black woman I felt badly out of place". [school-leaver, female]

It needs to be acknowledged here that while Indigenous values may differ from those that are promoted within western ways of conducting business, Australian Indigenous peoples are motivated to study business with an aim of finding employment in business-related fields.

"I was interested in accounting and computers." [school-leaver, female]

"I've always wanted to an accountant." [school-leaver, female]

"I mainly want to do accounting and employment with taxation and (am) hoping to work for the mines, government and public service." [school-leaver, male]

For some mature-aged students it was seen to be important to gain business skills and knowledge so they can eventually work with their own communities. For example:

"To work in a community (Aboriginal) somewhere." [mature-aged, female]

"The reason why I want to study business: once again, it is back to the community....." [mature-aged, male]

"I wanted to be able to work with Aboriginal people and organisations particularly in the area of administration and management." [mature-aged, female]

The dilemma for many Australian Indigenous students who choose to study business is: how do you maintain and validate your own cultural values and knowledges whilst having to learn and appreciate knowledge that is constructed and underpinned by western values? For example, when students attempt to incorporate their own culture within academic practices such as assignments, what provision or expectations are there for the lecturers and tutors to understand or appreciate a different or alternative view?

Purposefulness & Participation

As first generation university students, Australian Indigenous student entry into university and purposes and preparedness for participation in tertiary business courses is analysed in this section of the report within a framework of 'purposeful participation'. The
construction of 'purposefulness' is defined as the relatedness between a student’s prior life and educational experiences and aspirations to succeed, and the mode within which students participate in university study. In this context, 'purpose' is seen as an individual construct that is not intrinsic to the course being studied. For a student’s purposes, for participation to be met and responded to, there must be negotiation and connectedness between the student’s aspirations for undertaking study and the university’s function as a teaching and accrediting institution.

The individual’s purposefulness in undertaking business study must also be seen within the broader socioeconomic context in which Australian Indigenous peoples are positioned within Australian society. Issues such as high unemployment, lower educational status and high mortality and illness rates among Australian Indigenous peoples [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 19941, as well as having the effect of need to motivate people to fight back against economically depressed life circumstances, may also to impact upon and detract from an individual’s desire and motivation to participate in tertiary study. These issues, more than the individual’s efforts, have been identified in this study as being more likely to be the causes of the high drop-out and attrition rates.

Hence, what purposeful participation is will vary from individual to individual. For the purposes of this study, however, a number of factors were identified which are seen to contribute to the individual’s construction of 'purposeful participation', and the individual’s expectation of the relevance of university study to their goals and aspirations. The study explored factors within the students' backgrounds in relation to their personal preparedness, which assisted them with their studies and contributed to their capacity to succeed, or dropout.

Some of the issues in relation to student preparedness and participation that the research team considered within the notion of 'purposefulness' were:

- what are the students' purposes in studying business?
- what is the relationship between the students' prior work and personal experiences and the motivation to study business?
- what are students' expectations of what it will be like to study business?
- what is the level of students' educational preparedness for business studies?
- what pressures do students experience in terms of decisions to continue with their studies?
- what are the students' modes of participating in their courses and university generally?

As stated earlier, despite the high attrition and failure rates of Australian Indigenous students in CQU Business courses, enrolment of these students has increased in recent years. Most of these students enter the courses with the intention of finding employment in business-related fields, and in particular, some mature-aged students wish to be able to use their business knowledge to work with their own communities. The initial specificity with which students are able to identify their personal goals and aspirations in relation to their studies appears to be related to whether they are mature-aged students or school-leavers, and with the era in which they commenced their business studies. Many school-leavers, particularly more recent commencing students, come to university with a broad awareness of what to expect from their studies as well as having studied business-related subjects at school. They often have family and friends who have attended university and hence see coming to university as offering them many opportunities. A school-leaver male
spoke of how he felt fortunate to come to university when comparing himself with his mates. He believed that graduating would be the ultimate reward:

“Well like graduating that’s the ultimate...you know that’s what you are here for.”
[school-leaver, male]

Even though many mature-aged students entered their courses with less specific understanding of what business study would entail and more limited academic preparation for tertiary study than school-leaver students, their purpose in participating in the Business course was related to a desire to get on with their lives. In interviews they expressed that they had wasted too much time already, and that they needed a degree to get the sort of job they wanted. A mature-aged female, newly commencing study, said:

“It was time to get in there and do something. Make something of myself, instead of being nothing for a change.” [mature-aged, female]

For these students it was often the unacceptability of their prior work experiences (which was often onerous physical work) which led them into Business. A mature-aged male who had left school in Year 8 said:

“I suppose I am getting a bit older and I have seen other individuals with not much education. I used to be a professional trochus diver and I would see divers trying to get bodgie doctors to get them through their tests. The only way that I could see that I could climb up the ladder was in furthering my education.” [mature-aged, male]

A number of the mature-aged students have come from labouring and semi-skilled backgrounds and education has become a means for breaking that cycle. In the case of these mature-aged students it can be said that we are seeing people who are determined to break a socioeconomic cycle which has historically positioned them in a limited range of occupational choices in terms of their educational preparedness and life expectations.

As noted previously, students’ purposes in studying business can be related to factors such as job expectations, family influences, and wanting to learn something that they could use to help their communities. All beginning students had some idea of how they wanted to use their Bachelor of Business degrees. Some wanted to work in an Aboriginal community; others were looking for work; and some were more specific about the field of work, with one student looking at something in marketing and tourism, and another considering the possibility of doing teaching after her business course.

Students’ understandings of what they wanted to study and the type of job they were interested in generally became more focused after their first semester. Most students who had been in the course for at least one semester had specific understandings of why they wanted to study business. Most had identified an area of study related to the type of job that they were seeking. All students were realistic in how significant their university studies would be in sustaining them in these careers. A mature-aged, male student said that he would like to use his skills in the community as “there were not many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands peoples who do business, and there are good job options.”

All students were self-motivated to study business because of what they saw as the real-life relevance of business for Australian Indigenous peoples. However, their purposes for doing so and their perceptions of what ‘business’ is, varied greatly across the group. A cross-analysis of the data indicates that there has been a definite increase in the awareness of and motivation to undertake business studies amongst students entering the course in recent years, compared with those who enrolled in earlier years. However, while most students now have some ideas about the types of positions they want to study for, many of
the students expressed that prior to undertaking their course they had very little 
expectation of what it would be like to study business – except that they had anticipated 
that the course would be challenging and interesting, as well as hard, demanding, intense 
and difficult. They believed that to be successful they needed to be focused, committed 
and persistent. However, one school-leaver commented that she had thought that the 
courses would be easier as she was coming directly from school and she found that she did 
not do as well in first year as she should have, as she had 'taken things too easily'. 
Beginning and first year students were very concerned about the amount of theory they 
were required to learn and commented on the course structure in first year where students 
believed that they had to study subjects which were outside their preferred discipline area 
(e.g. economics). Those who had been in their courses for over a year had moved into 
their specialist strands, and were positive about the learning that was occurring.

A female school-leaver who had been in her course for eight months at the time of the 
research interview spoke of the commitment required to succeed in the course:

*If they really want a Business degree they must be prepared to commit themselves to 
study and then you can have a lot of fun. But you have to be committed in the end or 
you will just give up.* [school-leaver, female]

Students' educational preparedness for university was a significant factor in their 
participation. Most of the students interviewed or surveyed as part of the research project 
had completed Year 12 but few had undertaken subjects in their formal schooling such as 
Mathematics B [or Mathematics 11, Economics, Accounting, which they believed may have 
more directly prepared them for studying Business at University. (Note: CQU does not 
require any of these subjects as prerequisites before enrolling in Bachelor of Business 
courses).

School-leavers were generally more positive about their prior education than mature-aged 
students. School-leavers thought that their prior education would assist them generally in 
communication and information access skills. However, many students had not 
undertaken content-related business subjects at school and they believed that this would 
have been helpful. Mature-aged students generally believed that their schooling 
experiences would not be helpful to them in studying business, but they did feel that their 
work experience in business areas would be helpful to them in their studies. An aspect of 
their prior schooling that school-leaver students believed would not be helpful to them in 
their tertiary studies, was the way in which the school system 'babied' them. One female 
school-leaver, who withdrew from business before she completed the course, described the 
outcomes of her own schooling:

*I don't believe we're self-disciplined enough or know how to stay motivated. We need 
to understand the responsibility and consequences of not going to class or not keeping up 
with your work. There's a big difference between school and university particularly if 
you have to move away from home*. [school-leaver, female]

By contrast another female school-leaver who had done her schooling as part of a home 
schooling program spoke of the skills she had learnt to become an independent and self-
motivated learner through that education. She believed that this preparation would be 
very helpful to her in her tertiary studies:

*I feel that the ACE (Accelerated Christian Education) system prepared me a lot better 
than what the State system would have done for University. I learnt how to motivate 
myself, and how to learn and not rely on people to teach me. I can do it myself.*
[school-leaver, female]
However, generally across all students, their fears prior to commencing their courses were related to not having done enough business-specific subjects prior to university, and the belief that this would have been helpful to them—even though the University has English only as a prerequisite subject for business courses. One male student who entered university directly from school spoke of a program in which he had been involved at school called the Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program [AITAP] which had enabled him to visit universities and participate in tertiary preparation activities. However, while he believed he was reasonably prepared for university entry on the academic side of things, he did not feel prepared in terms of the subjects that he had to undertake in his first year. He would have liked to have completed more business-specific subjects at school as he believed that these would have been helpful to him.

An issue that all the research participants faced as an aspect of their participation in their course, was fear in relation to a number of issues including the spectre of withdrawing from university. Prior to commencing their courses, students' fears were generally about issues such as finances and the implications for survival and support, adjusting to a new social environment, as well as the fear of failing. Those who had experienced failure before were concerned about experiencing it again, believing that it may contribute to their own sense of worthlessness and reinforce their exclusion from mainstream participation. A newly commencing mature-aged female, who had previously commenced another tertiary level course but had found she was not suited to it and was now wanting to study business said:

"First my attitude was if I fail it will be a good learning experience, but now I'm terrified of failing. I don't want to start it and not finish it. There's so many things that I have started and not finished. I don't want to be sitting at home next year." [mature-aged, female]

While some may view Australian Indigenous student attrition within tertiary education is inconsequential (at least offering these students the opportunity to experience tertiary studies despite the distinct possibility that they may not complete the course) for some of the students, this issue of failure was critical. For those persons who have been systematically oppressed over a long period, such failure may serve to accentuate their own incapacity to participate in the mainstream's allocation of goods and services, through employment, traineeships, etc.

All but one of the students within this group had friends or knew of other students who had left during their first year of study. These students had left for financial, family and personal reasons such as homesickness. Some students had found it difficult to cope with the course or were tired of study. Some of the students interviewed had themselves considered leaving during their first year for reasons such as financial and family pressures, homesickness, course demands, and a sense that they were not reaching their own levels of achievement. But they had realised that it was important for them to stay on because they would be better off with a qualification. One student explained that he would be the first student in his family to complete a degree and that this was very motivating for him. Another said that he had wasted enough time already and that he just wanted to 'get on with it'. In their decision to stay on, these students spoke of the importance of personal commitment to their own goals, family support, personal determination, and support from people within the university such as the CAITEC Business Academic Adviser. A first year, female school-leaver who had considered leaving during her first semester said:

"I have considered leaving especially with exam pressure and the pressure to study. But I know it's only going to last a short while and in the end I will have my degree. Just stick at it and then I will be happy." [school-leaver, female]
In explaining the factors that pressured them to consider withdrawing from their course, only one student spoke of dissatisfaction with the course curriculum and teaching. A small number of students described dropping out of particular subjects or not attending tutorials because of the actions of their lecturers and tutors. For the most part, however, students located their own and others' consideration to withdraw or their failure as being within themselves. This non-critical awareness by students of the implications of their own participation within the university and socioeconomic and strategic positioning in society generally is a concern within a context of purposeful participation.

As previously noted 'purposes of participation' are not fixed and are not intrinsic to the course itself but are individual constructs that have relevance and meaning to the individual. Hence, these purposes should be in a continual state of renegotiation and reconstruction as students develop awareness of the outcomes of their participation in university life. Most students entered the course with some degree of expectation that it would enhance their own personal quality of life and help them to develop a stronger political sense of how the world operates, so that they may contribute to their own communities. However, it is not until the students are in the course that they become aware of the lack of congruence between their own sense of business and the ways in which business is constructed as a study discipline within the academy.

Students who have been unable to renegotiate their purposes in ways that enable them to continue participating in the university in academic contexts, often become very purposeful in their participation in other aspects of university life, such as social interaction. They may take a meaningful role in a centre such as CAITEC and participate in CAITEC community activities, rather than attend lectures or complete assessment tasks. In the process of doing so, some of these students become highly skilled. However, where this skilling is outside the main university assessment framework in business, these students are unable to get credit for their learning and they leave university without any indication of the skills that they possess. One student, for example, who had a strong entrepreneurial flair, was able to prepare a very effective business plan for promoting a business which he established, but dropped out of the course as he did not believe it was practical enough and relevant to his purposes.

In summary, Australian Indigenous students are expected to conform to the university's expectations of what a 'university student' is and should achieve. These students are then expected to adopt pre-given purposes that may not sit well with their own meaning systems, or reasons for attending university. The result is that many of those leaving before graduating have not had their expectations met by that offered by the university. Moreover, there is little opportunity for students to re-build their own sense of purpose in more specific ways, through a more critical participation in what university offers once they arrive. Nor is there opportunity to alter the university's expectations expressed in both content and in organisational culture.

This latter aspect is critical to any examination of teaching and learning and will be explored in the next section of the report. The outcome is that some students choose to stand outside of the course and not participate, even though they may still actively engage in being a part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands student centre at the University; others unquestioningly take on board the new discourse and attempt to reproduce its texts, without critically assessing their cultural appropriateness, while others struggle to participate, yet at the same time maintain a sense of their own cultural identity.
Teaching & Learning

The Australian University system is based on western values and ‘norms’ and the teaching of business-related subjects at CQU can be seen to be part of this system. Australian Indigenous students entering university may experience difficulties in assimilating to the western concept or perception of what business is about. This can be attributed to both cultural and socioeconomic factors, which have been previously explored in the sections on Constructions of Business and Purposefulness. Many of the students, particularly from the first three groups, believed they had the prerequisite reading and writing skills to enable them to study business, but found after entering the course, they were lacking in an understanding of ways of ‘doing’ Business academically.

Learning is also influenced by preparation for university. Although the majority of students in all groups had completed 12 years at high school, many of them had not studied business subjects. According to the University handbook and the unit profiles, this should not present any problems, as the only prerequisite for entry into the Bachelor of Business is Senior English. The situation is different in reality, however, particularly if the students have entered through an alternative entry system. One continuing student believed he would have been better off had he completed more business subjects at school (he only had English and Mathematics that were relevant). Although not stated in the unit profiles, some Business units make assumptions of prior student knowledge and courses begin at this point, e.g. Mathematics 1 knowledge is advantageous to students in the Quantitative Methods unit. It should be noted, however, that we have no evidence from the study that students who have done Business-related units at school, actually do better than students who have not.

One suggestion from Group 2 students as to how to make the units easier and more enjoyable for themselves included having lecturers more enthusiastic and less boring. Many of the students said that they only saw the lecturers outside the lecture times if they required assistance with an assignment. A student who had undertaken the course some years previously suggested that:

"lecturers and tutors needed to be more approachable, sociable and personal (ie., culturally sensitive)." [mature-aged, female]

However, the majority of these students also believed that the lecturers communicated well.

The continuing students did not make comments such as these so perhaps lecturers are improving in this area. Overall, students were positive about the accessibility and support they receive from their lecturers. One student said:

"I have been to lots of lecturers and they cannot do enough for you. They always find an answer for you. I have had no problems." [mature-aged, male]

Most students said that most lecturers knew them by name or by sight, which may be due to the size of the Faculty and the ways in which students are taught. However, one student suggested that it might also be because there are “only a few black faces” in the course.

A suggestion from a continuing student was that more guest speakers should be introduced to the lectures to make the subject more ‘real world’. This was reiterated by a past student who recommended that the lecturers should pass on more of their professionalism and social skills by the introduction of a business etiquette course.
Two negative responses reflected on lecturer's personal traits. These comments referred to what students saw as the arrogance of some lecturers. One student suggested that one or two lecturers were:

"bigoted, biased and unable to be objective." [mature-aged, female]

One of the students also had a problem with a tutor:

"the tutor picks on me, always asking me questions in class. The tutor makes me shame in class, in front of the class and quite often, I do not know the answers and he makes a show of me, a big scene. I try and hide from the tutor in the class." [school-leaver, male]

It should be noted that this was one of only a few negative responses about lecturers or tutors and should therefore not be regarded as being a regular occurrence. Most lecturers were seen to be helpful and accessible.

Some continuing students believed more emphasis should be placed on real world participation and less on theory. When asked if they could use their cultural and/or community knowledge to complete tasks, several of the students believed that there were few opportunities to use this knowledge for subject material.

Another area of concern for students was with assessment – some students were unhappy with the emphasis placed on final examinations and showed a preference for more regular forms of assessment such as weekly tests as they believed that this would assist in the learning and retention process. One student complained about the time limits on assignments and the harshness of the penalties imposed. Difficulties in accessing part-time tutors was also mentioned by some students.

Other areas of concern were that lecturers did not make course expectations clear in unit profiles and that many of the first year units had large class sizes, which was daunting for many of the Australian Indigenous students.

On a positive learning note, a comment by a Group 2 student was that studying business had assisted him to have a more judgemental and analysing attitude.

In summary, some of the key pedagogical issues that students expressed concern about were that:

- course expectations not being made explicit by lecturers in course unit profiles;
- lecturers make assumptions of prior student knowledge and they use this as a starting-point for their courses, without being explicit about this;
- the greater emphasis is on theory and not enough on applied contextual learning;
- the irrelevance of the contexts of meaning which lecturers use for their classes to Australian Indigenous students' own life experiences and understandings of what constitutes "Business" in Australian Indigenous contexts. Students indicated that there are very few opportunities for them to insert their own cultural knowledges into the course;
- the emphasis on cramming and summative evaluation techniques. Some students expressed a desire to have more regular and holistic assessment activities, which would help them to reflect upon and monitor their progress;
• the daunting sizes of some of the first year classes; and
• the difficulty in accessing part-time tutors.

Some of these issues can be examined within the transmission model of tertiary education—you ‘tell them what you are going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them’ [Good & Brophy 1990, p.201]. Freire [1972] refers to this as the “banking concept” of education in which the lecturer/tutor is the “bank clerk” filling up the minds and bodies of students as the “repositories”. Freire says that education “becomes an act of depositing, with the students as the ‘repositories’ and the teacher as the ‘depositor’” [1972, p.45]. Freire [1972, p.47] argues that the more effectively students accept this mode of education, the less able they are to critically reflect upon their world, and the more able they are to accept the knowledges about the world which are presented to them.

However, in reflecting upon tertiary education from within this transmission model, we acknowledge the pressure that is on university lecturers, especially in small regional universities within the present climate, to engage in academic activities such as consultancies, funds generation, research and publication. Thus, while lecturers and tutors may be keen to teach in differing ways, they may be restricted from doing so because of structural constraints such as large, impersonal class sizes and huge assessment loads.

There are simple ways however, in which lecturers can implement teaching practices that actively encourage students to critically reflect upon what they are learning and how they are learning. This is particularly important for Australian Indigenous business students if they wish to move between their own and the traditional western connotations of what constitutes “Business”. In the process, ‘business’ itself can also be made problematic, and more open to constructive change. Many lecturers are unaware of the westernised-nature of the material they teach. With a greater recognition of the diversity of the total student population, and therefore, a more inclusive curriculum, Australian Indigenous students may attain a lesser degree of marginalisation.

Support

Support for Australian Indigenous students at CQU is offered by CAITEC. This centre provides an Academic Adviser for each discipline area within CQU and this person is located at CAITEC. Academic Advisers provide academic support and personal counselling among other ancillary services such as student administration.

The Australian Indigenous students who participated in the research identified three main areas of support as being important to them. They indicated that the main source of information and advice about attending university was from CAITEC staff and the Business Academic Adviser through the CAITEC recruitment program. Motivation to stay in the course was attributed to the counselling offered by the Business Academic Adviser while academic support from the Business Academic Adviser was a major factor for participation for students.

The data collected in the research indicated that many of the students visited CAITEC regularly because of the accessibility and approachability of the Business Academic Adviser, other CAITEC staff, and the services and general support that CAITEC offered. Students expressed that they felt very much at ease with the Adviser because of the informal and ‘laid back’ approach that was taken. They also said that they felt like equals with the Academic Adviser because it was not like a typical teacher/student relationship.
The data also indicated that students used the Adviser for planning course structures, study support and extra tutorial assistance, and preparation for exams and assignments. Furthermore, the students extensively used the Adviser in an advocacy and liaison role between themselves and the Faculty of Business. In light of these services, students expressed overall satisfaction with the support that was offered.

"...suppose CAITEC, they've really just got everything for you. If you happen to come up and you need something, if CAITEC can't help you then they just direct you to a person who can. They offer a lot of services." [school-leaver, male]

While students were positive about the support offered by CAITEC, many could not suggest explicit ways of improving student support practices. This could be related to the close personal relationships that these students have with CAITEC and the subsequent inability to stand back and be constructively critical about the type of support they receive. However, some second and third year students suggested that CAITEC support could be seen to be encouraging students to become too dependent and “comfortable”.

"...see with Murri students, they get into a comfort zone...and it doesn’t have to be where staff have to be telling them to be there and to do this or that...it’s just that the whole university concept, where you have to be responsible for yourself and that. I think a lot of Murri students...they get caught up in it kind of thing...so...if I think Murri students need to be told when to, there and stuff like that..." [school-leaver, male]

In addition to the suggestion of dependent learning, the majority of students who participated in the research attributed failures, in terms of failing units or cancelling course enrolments, to personal shortcomings.

A concern here in critically evaluating support models within tertiary institutions is whether these models can serve to unwittingly perpetuate the marginalisation of Indigenous students. Nakata [1994] believes that Indigenous students should be taught and/or supported to have a greater understanding of what happens when they interact with text and knowledges, and to understand that their “difficulties” are not only due to their own “deficiencies” as students. This notion of challenging the system is supported by some of those students who entered university as mature age students:

"Impact on the system. Stop trying to change the student to fit - get the system to give a bit..." [female, mature-aged]

Some of the typical institutional solutions currently in place in Australian universities to support Australian Indigenous students may be seen to emanate unwittingly from the deficit/‘blame the victim’ perspective. As such they usually take the form of special counselling and Advisory support services, ‘bridging’ and ‘developmental’ programs, tutorials and an array of extra student support services. It is critical that we evaluate these approaches as they are generally about the student disciplining both the body and the mind, working on oneself, fixing oneself up for the duration of study [Nakata 1994] and as such are part of the continuing project of colonisation.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that all of these services are genuinely intended to help students successfully partake of what the university has to offer. In fact, without such supports as these, the success rate of students would be even lower. However, the concern here is that while such programs require students to virtually ‘check their culture in at the gate’ so that they can make the transition to the culture of tertiary institutions, they still do not appear to produce the desired results of full and equal participation and success as previously indicated in Table 4.
The above comments are not intended to devalue such services, but to highlight that if Australian Indigenous students are to be successful, support must be driven from within the students’ own cultures, so that they reaffirm such cultures and empower the students to access the tools to problematise the political nature of the acquisition of knowledge. Support therefore has to be ‘two ways’: it has to work with individual and groups of students on their own terms, and on the study and cultural issues which are required in order to succeed at the university. However, the support services must also help students to break down their own notions of self-blame, de-colonising their minds and bodies in order to participate on different terms in what the university has to offer. In addition, the support services must also make problematic for the rest of the university the continuing colonising impulses that underlie many of the existing practices of academic work and cultural organisation.

The support programs and services that are offered by the University must then connect with the students’ own aspirations and cultural dispositions sufficiently, if they are to make the experience one worth enduring. Thus, if we cannot create an environment within the university where these students feel at home, all the special programs and support services which we offer may have little value in attracting and holding students in significant numbers. And as Kirkness & Barnhardt [1991] suggest, these students will retain the independence to move in and out of universities over a period of time dependent on how responsive universities are to their needs.

CONCLUSION

Implications of Research Findings for CQU Teaching and Support Practices

The research findings indicate very strongly that for Australian Indigenous first year Business students at CQU, participation in their first year units is a significant ‘gatekeeper’, as illustrated by the high attrition of Australian Indigenous students highlighted in Table 4. Its relationship to longer term success is devastating both in the wastage of student numbers and in the effect it has in reinforcing the failure Australian Indigenous people experience in their attempts to share in some of the capital of the education system. This has consequences for the future participation of Australian Indigenous communities in Australian society.

The purpose of making the high attrition rates of Australian Indigenous Business Students a subject of research was not to reflect poorly upon these students, their families and communities, but to encourage those personnel in higher education to critically reflect upon the issues of tertiary participation for Australian Indigenous students.

Many Indigenous educators assert that Indigenous pedagogy is underpinned by Indigenous values and protocols wherein Indigenous students may be culturally and historically positioned as different. These differences coupled with social problems such as poor health standards, inadequate housing, low economic status and limited access to resources result in limited outcomes from education for Indigenous peoples and may minimise the opportunities for Indigenous peoples to pursue post-school options. This has the effect of limiting the access to tools that may assist Indigenous peoples to deconstruct their own lives, thus deconstructing the knowledge which continues to colonise them.

If education providers are genuine in their commitment to produce more Australian Indigenous graduates, there is a need to do more than provide alternative avenues of access. Tertiary education institutions must not only provide the opportunity for Indigenous
Australians to have their perspectives and values included with the construction and production of knowledge, but must do so for a whole diversity of people.

“Although universities have begun to open their doors to us they have yet to become key players in Aboriginal self-determination. To do this they have to be prepared to change from within and even question some of their traditional pedagogies and practices.” [Bin Sallik 1993]

The following four key principles suggested by Kirkness & Barnhart [1991] may be relevant to the University responding to and supporting Indigenous students within tertiary education:

- **Respect** – by recognising student’s cultural identity and integrity;
- **Relevance** – through institutional legitimisation and inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and skills;
- **Reciprocity** – by understanding and building upon the cultural background of students, and thus facilitate Indigenous peoples access to the inner workings of the institutional culture to which they are being introduced;
- **Responsibility** – by enabling Indigenous peoples to take control over their lives.

In the context of the research findings, these principles can be linked to the issues of the recognition of the diversity of Australian Indigenous students and the need for universities to be more responsive to the knowledges that students bring with them. They are about education being a two-way process; they are about instituting ways of teaching and curriculum design which recognise the diverse clientele which comprise universities; and they are about teaching students to become more critical so that they can operate in a diversity of contexts without losing their identity. These principles are essential, not only for promoting better support for the existing cohorts of Australian Indigenous students at CQU, but also as a basic focus for changing the culture of the University to be more inclusive of Australian Indigenous perspectives. At this stage there is a need to explore much more strongly how teaching practices and support can affirm the range of Australian Indigenous identities, affirming cultures while ensuring that students are taking advantage of the services available within the university. The Faculty of Business, CAITEC and the Australian Indigenous communities need to work together to ensure that the process of education is not a process of assimilation. These are not small, short-term or easy tasks. However, they are necessary if we are to ensure that our Australian Indigenous students experience success and are able to affirm their self-identification to include success at university within that experience.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**CAITEC**

In addition to the regular sessions run by the university generally, CAITEC, in conjunction with the Faculty of Business staff, should organise sessions on:

- study skills;
- reading and writing skills;
- assignment preparation;
- listening skills;
- note-taking skills;
- time management.
These sessions should be run in conjunction with the orientation programs and specific follow-up sessions should also be organised throughout the first year.

The CAITEC selection and orientation activities should be broadened to include more extensive liaison and collaboration between CAITEC and the Faculty of Business to ensure that potential and commencing students are familiar with staff and students from both areas. In the event of a mid-year intake, similar sessions should also be arranged. This will mean more than introductions at an orientation morning tea, and should include Faculty of Business staff and students in the Orientation Camp, the pre-orientation academic skilling and the First One-Hundred Days Program. This would signify to commencing students that the orientation process is about orienting students to CQU and the Business Faculty, and not just CAITEC.

Students should be encouraged to deal directly with business staff with an aim to fostering independent learning.

Students should be actively encouraged in all areas to become independent learners thus developing life-long skills.

Faculty of Business

The Faculty should recognise the importance of the student’s first year at university, as this year sets the scene for the remainder of their university life. In many instances this transition period becomes too overwhelming for the student and they often withdraw from their course. Steps that lecturers could take to ensure a smoother transition period include:

- provision of an overview and history of each specific unit in the first lecture;
- provision of a rationale for studying each specific unit in the context of the Bachelor of Business;
- encouraging students to give their views as to what knowledge and skills they think the unit will provide them as individuals;
- encouraging students in tutorials to discuss why this unit is important to them so they can put it in perspective and become more focused;
- revision of modes of teaching currently in use in each unit;
- ensuring that overheads for each week’s lectures are available in either book form or on the network prior to the actual lecture;
- working on a more inclusive curriculum;
- where possible, relating the theory and models to an Indigenous background;
- establishing a ‘buddy’ system between staff and Indigenous students;
- promotion of business studies internally with Indigenous education students, which would ensure that when these students are in the education system as teachers, they can then pass on reliable information.

CAITEC/Faculty of Business

CAITEC and the Faculty of Business should identify two specific contact people - one in CAITEC and one in the Faculty of Business - for Indigenous business students. These people should be encouraged to maintain close contact between CAITEC and the Faculty of Business and between staff and the students.
Organise regular social functions (two each term) to encourage staff and students to mix in a relaxed environment.

Both CAITEC and the Faculty of Business should promote business studies and what is involved in business throughout high schools in the CQU regions. This type of promotion should be commenced early in students' high school years rather than in their final year. Further, CAITEC and the Faculty of Business should collaborate to provide information on the role of Indigenous studies within business.

Students should be advised that any additional services provided (e.g. remedial tutorial) as part of the unit, are in addition to (not instead of) the normal class hours.

CAITEC and the Faculty of Business should collaborate to develop programs and short courses tailored to meet the needs of Indigenous community groups and individuals. This process would facilitate both community development efforts as well as University equity access strategies. Furthermore, this endeavour would enhance the marketability of CQU Business courses, not only within the Indigenous community, but also within the broader community.

CAITEC and the Faculty of Business should collaborate to develop a Foundation Program for Indigenous people wanting to study Business. While this program could serve as an introductory mechanism to Business studies, it could also benefit Indigenous students who may wish to contribute their cultural knowledges to the Business discipline. This could be achieved by designing the course so that it provides prerequisite skills and knowledge required to undertake business studies, introducing units of study relevant to the ways in which Indigenous peoples conduct business and offers opportunity for Indigenous students to do practicum in Indigenous organisations. This program should have University accreditation or at least partial accreditation for University award units.

University

One of the major factors for all students studying is the costs they will incur over and above their HECs fees. A textbook list with an indication of the costs of texts for each of the courses offered by the university should be made available to allow students to budget in advance. This listing should include information about all materials that will be required, including distance education materials etc. While it is accepted that texts change from year to year, a rough indicator of the cost of texts, based on previous years, could be compiled for specific majors e.g. accounting, human resource management, information systems, management and marketing.

Orientation week in second term should include some sessions for continuing first-year students to assist them in organising themselves for second term. The orientation in first term provides an overload of information and some of the more important information e.g. timetables, location of lecture rooms is specifically given or shown to the student. In second term, students are expected to be independent when realistically they still have a significant level of uncertainty.

Now that there are more Australian Indigenous students graduating from CQU, there is an opening for the Alumni Association to start a special interest group for these students.

The University should ensure that the set 'study-week' prior to the examination period is exam-free to allow for students to maximise their study time.
Further Research

This project has clearly only documented the 'tip of the iceberg' – one cohort of students in one course in one faculty at one university. Yet this research has major implications. These implications will be transferable to other faculties at this University and to other universities in Australia.

If the recommendations described in this report were to be fully implemented, we anticipate it would have a positive impact on the university experience of Australian Indigenous students.

It would be beneficial to the Australian Indigenous students who started their Business degree in 1996, to continue the longitudinal study that commenced with this research project, until these students either complete their degree or leave the system. This would produce the first detailed profile of the university experience for Australian Indigenous students from orientation through to graduation.
Previous Reporting Regarding this Research Project

Conference Papers Presented


Seminars Presented

References

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 1994, Indigenous Australia today: A statistical focus by ATSIC regions, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.


Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), 1995, National review of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report, DEET, Canberra.


Appendix A:

Individual Interviews
SURVEY GROUP 1 – Cohort study of entering business students

Identifying factors affecting Australian Indigenous progression through the CQU Bachelor of Business program

This survey is voluntary and anonymous, and no names, addresses or any other identification will be asked for or recorded. The survey is meant to be informal in nature and the questions are more of a guide to encourage thought, conversation and candidness.

I. Background

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out if the student’s personal/family life/living arrangements will be significantly changed by coming to uni and how these changes may affect the uni experience.)

1. Age

2. Gender

3. Where is your home community?

4. Do you have to move to attend university next year? If yes, how will this affect you? How will this affect your family?

5. Have any of your family or friends attended TAFE or university? (Prompt: if yes, please describe who and where, etc.)

6. Have any of your family or friends studied business at university or TAFE? (Prompt: if yes, please describe who and where, etc.)
7. Are any of your family or friends continuing on to university with you? *(Prompt: if yes, please describe who and where, etc.)*

8. Are any of your family or friends going to be studying business with you next year? *(Prompt: if yes, please describe who and where, etc.)*

**II. School and/or Work Experience**

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out if the student’s educational and/or work experiences have been adequate preparation for pursuing university education. The focus is on the student’s perception of his or her experiences and how they have prepared him or her and **not** on student’s performance in school.)

1. What formal education have you undertaken?

2. How would you describe your formal educational experiences?

3. Is there anything you can think of that would have made school a better experience for you?

4. Do you feel what you learned or experienced in school will help you at the university? Please explain.

5. Do you think there is anything that you learned or experienced in school that will help you to study business at university?

6. Did you receive any advice *(Prompt: guidance/career/vocational counselling, etc.)* about going to university? If so, how did it help you decide to go to university?

7. Who did you receive any advice *(Prompt: guidance/career/vocational counselling, etc.)* from? *(Prompt: teachers, guidance officers, family, uni staff, CAITEC, etc.)*

8. How did you find out about CAITEC’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Alternative Entry program offered at CQU? In what ways, if any did this influence your decision to apply to university?

9. Do you feel prepared to go to university? Why or why not?

10. Do you have any concerns about going to university? Why or why not?
11. Have you participated in any school-based “work experience” programs if so what were they? *(Prompt: for example, for how long, in what industry, in what skill area; childcare, primary teaching, accounting, etc.)*

12. What type of job experiences have you had? *(Prompt: paid or unpaid, any type of job experience is relevant)* (If none, skip to Section III.)

13. How would you describe your job experiences?

14. What aspects of what you learned or experienced in your job experience do you feel will help you at the university?

### III. Business Questions

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out what the student’s perceptions of studying business are and what specifically motivated or influenced the student to pursue the study of business.)

1. Who or what motivated you or influenced you to study business?

2. What interests you, or what do you like about business?

3. Why do you want to study business?

4. What do you think you will learn by studying business?

5. What made you decide to study business at CQU rather than at another university or TAFE?

6. What was the format of any information have you received about CQU’s business courses? *(Prompt: for example, brochures, word of mouth, CDROM, etc.)*

7. What was the content of any information have you received about CQU’s business courses?

8. Where did you obtain your information about CQU’s business courses (e.g. careers market, school visit by business staff, school visit by CAITEC, teachers, ELP day, etc.)?
9. Do you know what area of business you will focus on?  (For example, accounting, management, information systems, etc.)

10. How do you think you will use your business degree when you have completed your studies?

11. Has anyone told you what to expect about studying business at CQU? If yes, what have you been told?

12. What do you think studying business at CQU will be like?

13. What do you know about CAITEC services to support business students?

14. Do you think you will use these services? Why or why not?

IV. Final Comments

Are there any other overall comments you would like to make at this time about any thing, or any topic you do not feel was covered?

END SURVEY

NB: Interviewers, have the subject review the survey if he or she wishes, make any necessary edits and record the time the survey was completed.
CONFIDENTIAL

Date:
Time started:
Time finished:
Interviewer:
Subject Number:

Tick one: ___ First year, first time enrolled Bachelor of Business Students

___ Continuing Bachelor of Business Students

Identifying factors affecting Australian Indigenous progression through the CQU Bachelor of Business program

This survey is voluntary and anonymous, and no names, addresses or any other identification will be asked for or recorded. The survey is meant to be informal in nature and the questions are more of a guide to encourage thought, conversation and candidness.

I Background

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out if the student’s personal/family life/living arrangements have been significantly changed by coming to uni and how these changes may have affected the uni experience.)

1. Age

2. Did you enter university directly from school?

3. Gender

4. Where is your home community

5. What are you living arrangements while you are studying? Have they changed during your time here? (Prompt: for example; are you living at home with your family, or boarding or staying with friends, room mates, etc.)
6. How often do your visit your family (home community) enough while you’re attending university?

7. Have you been called back to your family (home community) since commencing university? If yes, how many times?

8. Do you feel you get to visit your home community enough? Why or why not?

9. Do you have a good support system here in Rocky? If yes, who are they?

10. What generally is your main form of transport to get to CQU? (Prompt: Walk, bus, car, car pool, bike, etc.)

11. Have any of your friends left university since you arrived? If yes, can you explain the reasons why?

12. Have you at any time considered leaving university since you arrived? If yes, why did you consider leaving and what made you decide to continue on?

13. Have any of your family or friends attended university or TAFE? (Prompt: if yes, please describe who and where, etc.)

14. Have any of your family or friends studied business at TAFE or university? (Prompt: if yes, please describe who and where, etc.)

II. University Preparation

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out if the student’s educational and/or work experiences have been adequate preparation for pursuing university education. The focus is on the student’s perception of his or her experiences and how they have prepared him or her and not on student’s performance in school.)

1. How many years of formal education did you have before entering university? (Prompt: if individual has had no formal education, proceed to Question 6)

2. Did you study subjects in your final year at high school or TAFE that are relevant to business studies? If yes, what were they?

3. How would you describe your educational experiences before attending university? (Prompt: at home, private school, state school, high school, total years, etc?)
4. Do you feel what you learned and/or experienced in your formal education will help you at CQU? Please explain.

5. Do you feel you that your formal education (if any) was adequate in preparing you for university, why or why not?

6. Is there anything you can think of now that would have made you feel more prepared for university?

7. Did you receive advice (Prompt: e.g. personal advice, guidance/career/vocational counselling) before you came to university? If yes, what was it and how did it help you decide?

8. What type of work experience did you have before starting at university? If none, skip to Section III.

9. How would you describe your work experiences?

10. Do you feel what you learned and/or experienced in your work or life experiences has helped you at the university?

III. Business Questions

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out what the student's perceptions and expectations of studying business are and what specifically motivated or influenced the student to pursue the study of business.

1. Who or what made you motivated you or influenced you to study business?

2. What interests you, or what do you like about business?

3. Why do you want to study business?

4. What made you decide to study business at CQU rather than at another institution?

5. What information did you receive about CQU's business courses prior to attending CQU?
6. Where did you obtain your information about CQU's business courses (Prompt, e.g. careers market, school visit by business staff, school visit by CAITEC, teachers, ELP day, etc.)?

7. Do you think the information you received was accurate? Why or why not?

8. What were your expectations about the business course, that is, what did you think it would be like?

9. Have your expectations been met? Why or why not? (Prompt: for example, how did the written material received before compare to the actual experiences?)

10. Do you know what area of business you will focus on? (Prompt: for example, accounting, management, information systems, etc.) If yes, what and why?

11. Do you feel that what you are learning in your course is relevant to your life and what you plan to do after you leave university?

12. Do you have plans for after university? If yes, please explain.

13. Have your goals for the future changed since you entered university? If yes, how.

14. Would you recommend the CQU business program to family or friends? Why or why not?

15. What advice would you give potential business students?

16. What would make you feel that your university experience had been successful?

IV. Teaching and Learning Environment
(The questions are meant to be specifically about the units offered through the Faculty of Business)

1. Are you a full time or part time student?

2. How many subjects are you taking this semester? What are they?
3. How would you describe your university workload? *(Prompt: too heavy, too light, about right?)* Please explain.

4. Which subjects have you found to be the most difficult within your business course and why?

5. Which subjects have you found to be the easiest within your business course and why?

6. Can you think of anything that might make the units easier and/or more enjoyable for students?

7. Are there any business subjects where you believe you have been able to apply your cultural and/or community knowledge to complete tasks? Please describe. *(Prompt: examples of this might include specific assignments, lectures or general discussion questions, etc.)*

8. Who or where do you go to obtain advice and assistance with your business studies?

9. In general, how often do you see the lecturers outside of lecture time? *(Prompt: Sometimes, frequently, never, etc.)*

10. For what purpose would you see your lecturers outside of lecture time?

11. Do you feel the lecturers are accessible? Why or why not?

12. Do you feel the lecturers communicate well with students? Why or why not?

13. Do you think your lecturers know who you are? How do you know this?

14. Can you think of anything that might improve the way the lecturers communicate with students?

15. Do you feel the tutors are accessible? Why or why not?

16. Do you feel the tutors communicate well with students? Why or why not?

17. Do you think your tutors know who you are? How do you know this?
18. Can you think of anything that might improve the way the tutors communicate with students?

19. Do you attend lectures? (Prompt, if yes, how often?) Why or why not?

20. Do you attend tutorials? (Prompt, if yes, how often?) Why or why not?

21. Overall, can you think of anything that might improve the way the business faculty teaches students?

22. Do you intend to continue on in the Bachelor of Business program? Why or why not?

23. If you intend to continue on at university but not in the Bachelor of Business program, which course do you hope to do? Why did you make this decision to change from Business?

24. Are there any other comments you would like to make about your experiences in the business faculty or about specific units? (Remember, this survey is completely anonymous).

V. CAITEC

1. Are you aware of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre (CAITEC) located on campus? If yes, how did you learn about it? If no, skip to section VI.

2. How often do you visit CAITEC?

3. What are the types of things that you visit or contact CAITEC for? (Prompt: please list all the things you can think of, e.g.; advice, academic, personal, financial, employment, Abstudy, ATAS, resources (computers, photocopying, etc), liaison/advocacy, student networks, facilities, time out, study areas, etc.)

4. What CAITEC services do you use, if any?

5. Have you been enrolled in the enabling program?

6. Do you use the enabling program? Why or why not?

7. Do you find the CAITEC staff accessible? Why or why not?
8. Do you think CAITEC staff communicate well with students? Why or why not?

9. Do you feel that the CAITEC staff know who you are? How do you know this?

10. Are there any ways you could suggest in which CAITEC staff could improve how they work with and support business students?

11. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about your experiences with CAITEC? (Remember, this survey is completely anonymous).

VI. Other Support Systems

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out the availability and use of personal support systems on campus for the student.)

1. What personal support groups do you have on campus? (For example; friends, individual faculty members, clubs, etc?

2. Is there any other particular faculty, division, centre, etc, here at CQU that has given you personal support? If yes please describe.

3. Are there any other support groups or people that have helped you (on or off campus)? If yes, please describe.

4. Is there anything you would like to comment on about your personal support systems or what could be done to improve the systems that are available to you at the university?

VII. Final Comments

Are there any other overall comments you would like to make at this time about any aspect of your university life, or any topic you do not feel was covered?

END SURVEY

NB: Interviewers, have the subject review the survey if he or she wishes, make any necessary edits and record the time the survey was completed.
Appendix B:

Survey Forms
CONFIDENTIAL

SURVEY GROUP 4 — No longer enrolled Bachelor of Business students

Welcome to the Faculty of Business/CAITEC survey.

Please read the following before completing the survey form.

This survey is voluntary and anonymous. You do not need to write your name, address or any other item that you feel may identify you on the survey form. Please feel free to answer the questions on the survey form as fully as you can. The survey is meant to be informal in nature and the questions are more of a guide to encourage you to think about your experiences at Central Queensland University.

Directions:

Where appropriate please place a tick in the box to show your answer. If it is an open question please feel free to write your answer as long as you want, to ensure that you say what you want to say.

Please note: Throughout the questionnaire, Central Queensland University or CQU is used to represent the names that this university has had in past years, ie. Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education [CIAE], University College of Central Queensland [UCCQ], University of Central Queensland [UCQ].

Identifying factors affecting Australian Indigenous Students progression through the CQU Bachelor of Business program

I. Background

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out in what ways, if any, your personal/family life/living arrangements were changed by you coming to university and to find out how these changes may have affected your experience at Central Queensland University [CQU].)

1. How old are you now?
   - 15-20 __
   - 21-25 __
   - 26-30 __
   - 31-35 __
   - 36-40 __
   - Over 40 __

2. How old were you when you first started university at Central Queensland University?
   - 15-20 __
   - 21-25 __
   - 26-30 __
   - 31-35 __
   - 36-40 __
   - Over 40 __

3. Gender
   - Male __
   - Female __

4. Did you have to move away from your home community to attend university?
   - Yes __
   - No __

5. How did you enter university?
   - Normal Entry __
   - CAITEC Alternative Entry Program __
6. While studying at CQU, were you? Full-time ___ Part-time ___ Both ___

7. Did you complete your CQU Business degree course?
   Yes ___ No ___

8. How long did it take you to complete your CQU Business Degree course?
   3 years ___ 4 years ___ 5 years ___ 6 or more years ___

9. What were your accommodation arrangements in your first year at CQU? [Please tick more than one if you changed your accommodation during your first year.]
   Living at Home ___ Residential College ___ Private Board [relatives] ___ Private Board [others] ___ Flatting [on own] ___ Flatting [with others] ___ Woongarra Hostel ___ Other hostel ___ Caravan Park ___ Other ___

10. Did you change your accommodation arrangements after first year?
    Yes ___ No ___

    If “YES”, please describe how your living arrangements changed during the time you were studying at CQU?

11. Did you have a good support system outside of the university while you were studying at CQU?
    Yes ___ No ___

    If “YES”, please describe who or what your support was? [You may want to write about aspects such as family, money, friends, accommodation, a place to study.]
12. Did you feel you got to visit your family and home community enough while you were studying at CQU? Please explain.

13. Were there any times when family commitments affected your study at CQU?
   Yes ___  No ___

14. Were your friends at CQU important to you in your course?
   Yes ___  No ___
   If “YES”, in what ways were they important to you? [You may want to write about aspects of your study such as help with assignments and exams, text-books, getting notes, etc]

15. Were there any times before you finally left CQU, when you considered leaving or dropping out of university?
   Yes ___  No ___
   If “YES”, why did you consider leaving and what made you continue on?

16. Had you begun any courses at university or TAFE before you commenced your study at CQU?
   Yes ___  No ___
   If “YES”, what courses did you undertake and did you complete the courses?

17. Had any of your family or friends attended university or TAFE before you commenced your course at CQU?
   Yes ___  No ___
   If “YES”, had any of them studied Business at University or TAFE?
II. University Preparation

(The purpose of the questions in this section of the survey is to find out if your educational experiences before university were an adequate preparation for you to take on university education. The focus is on your perception of your own experiences and how these experiences prepared you for university, not on your academic performance in school.)

1. What was your highest level of education before you started your Business course at Central Queensland University?

- University degree
- University/TAFE Associate Diploma
- TAFE Certificate
- Year 12
- Year 11
- Year 10
- less than Year 10

2. Do you feel that what you learned and/or experienced in your formal education before coming to university helped you at CQU?

- Yes __
- No __

Please explain how or how not?

3. Looking back on your first year experience at CQU, was there anything that the University could have done in Orientation Week or before to help you and other students be prepared for university?

III. Business Questions

(The purpose of the questions in this section is to find out what your perceptions and expectations of studying business are and what specifically motivated or influenced you to pursue the study of business.)

1. What was your major area of study in the Business degree?

- Accounting __
- HRM/ Management __
- Information Systems __
- Marketing __

2. Who or what motivated you or influenced you to study business at university? 

3. What did you think it would be like to study business before you came to CQU? Please explain your answer.

4. Where did you obtain your information about CQU's business courses? [please tick as many as you wish]

   - careers market.
   - school visit by CQU staff
   - school visit by CAITEC
   - teachers
   - guidance officer
   - counsellor
   - family members
   - friends
   - career materials
   - other

5. Do you think the information you received about CQU Business courses was accurate? Why or why not?

6. Were your expectations about the Business course before you came to university met during the actual course? Why or why not?

7. What interested you, or what did you like, about studying business at CQU?

8. Who or where did you go to obtain advice and assistance with your business studies while you were studying at CQU?

9. What do you think were the most useful things you learned from doing the business course at CQU?

10. What was your overall impression of the business course? [eg you may like to talk about the subjects you studied, the types of assessment you had to do, the support you got from lecturers and tutors, relationships with other students, etc]
11. Overall, can you think of anything that might be done to improve the way the Business Faculty teaches students? [eg you may like to talk about the subjects you studied, the types of assessment you had to do, the support you got from lecturers and tutors and their accessibility, and access to resources]

12. Reflecting back on your Business degree, are there any things that you did not learn in your business course at CQU that you have found now since leaving University would have been helpful for you to have known? Please explain further [eg the content of the subjects and the skills you learned].

13. Would you recommend the CQU business program to family and/or friends?
   Yes ___  No ___

14. What did you hope to do after you left university?

15. Have you been successful in achieving this goal?

IV. CAITEC
1. While you were studying at CQU were you aware of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre (CAITEC) located on campus?
   Yes ___  No ___

   If “YES”, how did you learn about it?

2. How often did you visit CAITEC while you were at university?

3. What are the types of things that you visited or contacted CAITEC for? (eg.; advice - academic, personal, financial, employment; Abstudy; ATAS; resources - computers; photocopying; liaison/advocacy with lecturers and tutors; student network; facilities; time out; study areas; etc.)

4. Did you find the CAITEC staff accessible and helpful?
   Yes ___  No ___

5. If you worked with the academic advisers in CAITEC, in what ways did they assist you?
6. Did you find that your use of the academic advisers changed during your time at CQU?

   Yes   No

   If “YES”, could you please describe in what ways?

7. What was your overall impression of CAITEC? [eg you may like to talk about the CAITEC environment, the services available, the cultural support, relationships with staff and other students, etc]

8. Are there any ways you could suggest in which CAITEC staff could improve how they work with and support business students? [eg you may like to talk about the CAITEC environment, the services available, the cultural support, relationships with staff and other students, etc]

VII. Final Comments

Are there any other overall comments you would like to make at this time about any aspect of your university life, or any topic you do not feel was covered above.

END SURVEY

NB: Before you finish the survey you may like to go back over your answers to check if there is anything else you would like to say.

Thank you for your co-operation in completing the survey. You should now place the completed survey form in the reply-paid envelope provided and return it to the address on the envelope. You do not need a stamp.

Also please remember to put your consent form in a separate reply-paid envelope and return it to the address on the envelope.

Best wishes.

Faculty of Business and CAITEC Research Team
Appendix C:

Focus Group 1
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Section 1: Expectations
1. What has it been like being a university student?
2. Has it been what you’d expected?
3. Have there been any surprises/excitements?
4. Do you have a better understanding of what Business is since you’ve started studying Business?
5. Now you’ve been here, how different is uni life/work from what you expected?

Section 2: Social/Personal Participation
1. What university-based activities have you participated in?
2. What CAITEC-based activities have you participated in?
3. What Business-based activities have you participated in?
4. Have you made any new friends since you’ve started studying?
5. Do you relate to these friends on a social, academic or cultural level?
6. What do you think about the university in terms of its atmosphere/environment?
7. Is it welcoming and friendly?
8. Do you feel that you fit in?
9. What does it feel like being and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student at CQU?
10. Do you think your Indigenous identity makes a difference at CQU?
11. Have there been any problems in relation to being indigenous?
12. Have there been any positive aspects about indigenous at this university?

Section 3: Academic Participation
1. Do you think that you were adequately prepared for university business studies? If no, why? If yes, or partly, what now seems the best preparation?
2. Was there much emphasis on prior learning?
3. Was the workload too much? If so which subjects? Why?
4. What was it like attending lectures and tutorials?
5. Were they helpful to your understanding of the subjects? If no why not?
6. Was the content relevant to your life plans?
7. Do you think the content had relevance to Indigenous peoples?
8. If necessary - how could lectures and tutorials be improved?
9. What do you feel about doing exams and assignments?
10. What were your expectations about doing exams and assignments?
11. Did you get all of your assessment in on time? If not why?
12. Is the assessment a reflection of what learned?
13. Do you think that what you’re learning is relevant to what you want to do after your degree?
14. Did you drop or add subjects? Which ones and why?
15. Have you changed your major/area of interest? If yes why?
16. Have you considered dropping out? If yes why?
17. If no, why have you decided to stay?
18. Have any of your friends dropped out? If yes, Why do you think they dropped out?

Section 4: Support

1. Did you get much help with your studies? Why?
2. Did you seek assistance from your lecturers or tutors outside class? If yes:
   What did you see them about?
   Were they available?
   Were they helpful and supportive?
3. Did you use CAITEC and the CAITEC Business Adviser for assistance with your studies? If yes, in what areas?
4. Did you use CAITEC for other assistance with other problems? If yes what?
5. Did you participate in activities that CAITEC run? If yes what were they?
6. Is CAITEC a place where you go to affirm your identity?
7. Do you have good knowledge of the university facilities?
8. Do you use such facilities as the library, ITD for e-mail account, etc.
9. What do think needs to happen to make things easier for you? In the areas of support and teaching?

Section 5: General

1. Have your living arrangements changed since you’ve started university?
2. Have your finances been adequate in helping you with accommodation, transport and course materials such as text books etc.
3. How do your family feel about you studying now?
4. Do you think that they have a better understanding of your university life?
5. What new routines have you had to develop to participate at university?
6. What are the things that you have learnt that may be valuable to others considering tertiary education?
7. What are the things you would do differently this semester?
Appendix D:

Focus Group 2
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Background Information
1. How many units did you commence studying at the beginning of the semester?
2. Did you drop/add any units during the semester?
3. What sort of marks did you have going into the final exam?
4. What were your grades for the semester?

Student Performance
1. Did you attend all classes? If not why? If not how regularly?
2. Did you participate in class? If not why?
3. Did you complete all readings/tutorial work etc. each week? If not why?
4. Did you get all assessment in on time? If not why?
5. Did you feel you kept up with the unit? If not which ones? When did you start to think you were falling behind? Why did you start falling behind?
6. Did you have to have a lot of help with the units? Which ones? Where did you get the help from?
7. Did you get assistance with your assignments? If so from whom?
8. Did you see any lecturers/tutors outside class?
9. In general what did you see them about? Content? Assignments? Personal?

Lecturer/tutor performance
1. Were the lecturers/tutors easy to talk to? If not why?
2. Were they approachable? If not why?
3. Were they available? If not why?
4. Did they discourage you from getting help?
5. Did they make you feel uncomfortable?
6. Did you feel they were biased towards you? If so in what way (negative or positive)?
7. Did they give you sufficient time when you went to see them?

Units studied
1. How difficult did you find the content in the units studied?
2. How much emphasis was put on prior learning? In all units? Which ones?
3. Was the workload too much? If so which ones? Was it weekly work or course assessment?

Hassles
1. What problems have you had during the semester that have prevented you from doing as well as you felt you could have at university?
2. If you had problems did you try to get help? If so from where? If no, why not?
3. Have there been any incidents (negative or positive) on campus this semester that have affected you greatly? If so what were they?

Your views

1. Do you feel you have a better understanding of what business is since you started studying?
2. Has this view changed from what you may have thought at the beginning of semester? If so how?
3. Have your views on university changed since you started? How?
4. Do you feel you get a fair deal at this university? In what way?
5. Do you feel you get enough support at this university? If not in which areas do you think it is lacking?
6. What advice would you give to students going into grade eleven? university?

The near future

1. Do you intend to carry on with your business degree? If not why?
2. If you are not going to continue business are you intending to switch to another course at CQU? If so which one? Why? Switching to another university? Why?
3. If you intend remaining in business, have you changed your views on what you will major in since you started? Why?

Overall

1. Briefly (maybe even one word), after completing one semester at CQU how would you sum:
   - Accounting IA
   - QM A
   - IS IA
   - Marketing Management
   - Faculty of Business
   - CAITEC
   - University support services
   - University life
   - CQU
   - Yourself as a student
Appendix E:

Consent Form
CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: Identifying the Factors Affecting the Progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students through the Bachelor of Business Programs.

This form to be completed by all persons participating in the research.

I agree to participate in the Factors Affecting the Progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students through the Bachelor of Business Programs Project being conducted by the Capricornia Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Education Centre and the Faculty of Business, Central Queensland University.

I understand that my identity in participating in this research will be well protected and that any information I give will be confidential.

I understand that the information gathered for this research is for the purposes of the above stated project only. If the information I contribute is to be used for any separate purpose, I understand that my permission will have to be asked for again before it can be used.

I understand that if I wish to withdraw from this research project at any time, I may do so by giving written notification to either of the principal investigators.

NAME: 

ADDRESS: 

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Signature

Date

Principal Investigators:

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Appendix F:

Principles of Operations
RESPECT

Deal with issues – not personalities

Recognise the value of each person’s contribution

Each person’s contribution is for the growth of the whole group

Each other

Ourselves

Each other’s opinions

Don’t interrupt or speak when others are speaking

Allow for growth of individuals, who may change their views

PARTICIPATION

Informal discussion < 5 mins/speaker

Limited rights of reply

Punctuality / agreed times

Participate at own level

Ensure that there is a process where individuals who withdraw are encouraged to rejoin the group [facilitator]

No resolution of any issue until everyone has indicated that they have had the opportunity to participate / discuss

Discussion as a group / no side discussions during the actual meeting

Make language accessible to all

Effective listening – hear what others say – wait and listen until speaker is finished and then respond.

SAFETY

Agree that there is a process whereby individuals may withdraw from discussion without disruption to the group

OK to ask for a change if what’s being said or done is threatening

LAWFULNESS

DEET and University regulations and policy

Adherence to agreed principles.