

# **Towards a framework to assist women enrolled in the WIST bridging program learning communities**

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# Abstract

Women are returning to study as mature age students in increasing numbers. Typically, these women have been away from study for a number of years and, in order to gain entrance into a university course most women are required to undertake a bridging program. Bridging programs can provide women with an alternative pathway into university and are designed to develop the academic and study skills required to successfully undertake undergraduate studies. The Women into Science and Technology (WIST) bridging program, offered by Central Queensland University, is a self-paced bridging program which provides a low cost, study at home option specifically designed to accommodate women's needs.

This research focuses on the perceived needs of women who are enrolled in the WIST program. To this end a survey instrument has been developed to identify the needs and challenges of women undertaking the WIST program. This instrument was used to explore the needs and challenges of women enrolled in the WIST program.

The survey results revealed that women have a range of needs which include support from the university, development of study and academic skills, personal qualities such as motivation and determination as well as support from their family and personal networks. The results indicate that the university needs to provide a range of support mechanisms and processes. These outcomes were used to develop the *Get SET for Study* framework that can be used for the planning and design of bridging courses similar to WIST for women who are considering enrolling in university.

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# Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this dissertation is to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted either in whole or part for a degree at this or any other university.

The submission of this dissertation is in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Masters of Informatics at Central Queensland University.

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