

Changing Lives & Changing the World

2020-2025

Flinders University

Student Success and Retention Strategy

Message from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Students)

This Success and Retention Strategy has been guided by our students' voice. In October 2018, the Flinders Student Experience team consulted with students to answer the question "What does success mean to students at Flinders?" The project resulted in over 900 responses, providing insight into how students defined their own success, as well as the barriers they encountered and the supports they needed to achieve success. The Student Success project showed us that students defined success in a wide variety of ways: getting a degree; being happy, healthy and socially fulfilled. They also identified the supports they felt they needed to achieve that success: having access to services to foster that success; graduating with a wealth of knowledge, hands on experience and a job; and studying in an environment that serves their specific needs. Some of these student quotes have been specifically included in this document. With that feedback front of mind, we commenced development of this strategic plan in 2019. In addition to the Student Success Project, student representatives and collaborators were part of each stage of developing this strategic plan. Thanks to the many students and staff that have contributed to this plan, and when implemented, to the success of all of our students.

Jesse Stevens (FUSA Education Officer).

As the Flinders University Student Association Education Officer, I welcome this strategy on behalf of Flinders University students. Retention from the student perspective is about success and persistence. Success means different things to different students, and this plan acknowledges that and provides a flexible framework for an approach to student success. Many students need academic and/or well-being support during their studies, and it is essential that the university prioritises ensuring students are provided with the support we need to achieve our goals and be successful, however we define that success. This plan, if implemented effectively, will set students up to succeed.

Note this document is to be interpreted in a manner consistent with other strategic documents including the 2025 Agenda and the Flinders Quality Education Framework.



MISSION

Summary of Flinders Student Success and Retention Strategic Plan

Our Student Success Mission:

To ensure that every Flinders student knows that they belong, that they can succeed, and are supported as they develop their capabilities to navigate a unique pathway to their own success.

This Mission is underpinned by our university culture which is Student Centred and where we value Integrity, Courage, Innovation, and Excellence.

Objectives

Objective 1: Be a Student Centred Community

Objective 2: Develop Students Skills for Success

Objective 3: Inspire and Engage Students

Objective 4: Develop and Support Wellbeing

Objective 5: Provide a Responsive and Navigable Learning Environment Online and In-person

How we will measure overall impact:

Flinders will have an overall retention rate above 85% by 2025, with continuous year on year improvement in retention, progress, completion and student satisfaction (Student Experience Survey).

Key implementation recommendations to achieve these objectives by 2025:

1. Redesign the student academic progress support process.
2. Develop a coordinated formal distributed leadership model of student success.
3. Implement quality teaching improvements to support transition and success.
4. Coordinate and design a holistic online quality digital experience to support student success.
5. Develop a university wide wellbeing plan that encompasses financial, psychological and physical wellbeing.
6. Celebrate student success, community and collaborations.

| Objective | Measure of Impact |
|--|--|
| 1. Be a Student Centred Community | <p>Consistent ratings of student satisfaction over 80% in all aspects of student (Student Experience Survey).</p> <p>Year on year improvements in ratings of Learner Engagement (Student Experience Survey).</p> <p>Year on year reduction in the percentage of students who report that 'Flinders could have made a change to their experience to encourage them to stay' (Flinders Exit Survey).</p> |
| 2: Develop Students Skills for Success | <p>Overall retention rate of 85%</p> <p>Year on year improvements in ratings of Student Support (Student Experience Survey).</p> <p>Year on Year improvement in 4 month graduate employment rate (Graduate Outcomes Survey).</p> |
| 3: Inspire and Engage Students | <p>Year on year improvements in ratings of Learner Engagement (Student Experience Survey).</p> <p>Year on Year improvement in 4 month graduate employment rate (Graduate Outcomes Survey).</p> <p>Year on year improvement on completion rates.</p> |
| 4: Develop and Support Wellbeing | <p>Overall retention rate of 85%</p> <p>Year on year improvements in ratings of Student Support (Student Experience Survey).</p> |
| 5: Provide a Responsive and Navigable Learning Environment Online and In-person | <p>Year on year improvements in ratings of Student Support and Teaching Quality (Student Experience Survey).</p> <p>Year on year reduction in the percentage of students who report that 'Flinders could have made a change to their experience to encourage them to stay' (Flinders Exit Survey).</p> |

Objective 1: Be a Community that is Student Centred.

Staff and students are collaborators together in our mission to change lives and change the world. We recognise that collaboration is built on relationships. We will foster a collaborative community where students are invited in to the intersection of research, learning, and engagement with the world around us. No matter where our students are from, how they come to university, or where they plan to go, students and staff will work together to support students to achieve their own unique version of success.

Strategies:

- 1.1 We will work together to foster a community of mutual respect, empathy and kindness.
- 1.2 We will define and measure our impact on student success based on ongoing dialogue with students.
- 1.3 We will enable, develop and embed student partnership so that students are a central part of every aspect of university decision making and are co-creators of their learning experiences.
- 1.4 We will equip and support student-staff collaboration in learning, research, and community engagement.
- 1.5 We will enable diverse pathways to success supporting equity, access and inclusion.
- 1.6 We will empower students to achieve to the very best of their ability, helping students understand and value their own strengths and build on their skills.
- 1.7 We will be responsive to students' individual differences and changing needs across the student life cycle and provide students with a range of personalised, timely and flexible supports.

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*Success at Flinders
means leaving each day
at uni with a positive
outlook and optimistic
energy. From lifelong
friends to encouraging
and supportive teachers
and university staff, so I
can honestly look back at
my time at Flinders and
remember how I felt
positive about my time
spent there*

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Objective 2: Develop Students Skills for Success

Everyone comes to university with some existing personal and professional skills, and some skills that will need to be developed to support their success. We will work with students to develop the skills they need to succeed.

Strategies

- 2.1 We will develop leadership and expertise in student transition and support within each college and providing avenues for communication between colleges.
- 2.2 We will support and equip quality teaching that applies Flinders Learning and Teaching Principles (see Flinders Educational Quality Framework).
- 2.3 We will establish sector leading support services that are visible and accessible across all campuses and delivery modes.
- 2.4 We will provide students with access to a range of quality topics and co-curricular resources that support the development of academic and professional literacies, and skills that support transition into university and through to their career.
- 2.5 We will monitor student academic progress in a way that is consistent across the university, and enables early, personalised support from staff trained to help with the combination of wellbeing, academic, and professional development needs commonly encountered by students.
- 2.6 We will provide feedback on academic and professional development to students in a timely way that helps them to monitor and assess their own progress, and develop calibrated self-efficacy.

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*Success means
developing new skills and
knowledge which will
equip me for my future
degree, with tailored
degrees, useful and
accessible facilities, and
helpful teachers who will
give me extra help when I
need it*

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Objective 3: Inspire and Engage Students

We understand that motivation is essential for student success. Student motivation is supported by fostering three aspects of engagement: cognitive (e.g. interest, personal relevance), emotional (e.g. positive experiences of growth, sense of connection to content and the learning community), and behavioural (e.g. time on task, perseverance). Staff will teach and support in a way that fosters student engagement.

Strategies

- 3.1 We will promote and support student success by providing the highest quality teaching, with particular attention to inspirational teaching and engaging curriculum that builds skills from entry to emerging expert consistent with the Flinders Education Quality Framework and Flinders Learning and Teaching Principles
- 3.2 We will support student perseverance, monitoring students' progress as they transition into, through, and out of university. We will seek to identify and address barriers to student motivation that may arise, and intervene with support in a timely manner.
- 3.3 We will enable students to identify and develop their own sense of purpose by being connected with multiple social groups, participating in diverse experiences, and engaging with examples of professional life.

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Having the support of a dedicated academic and professional staff team to help inspire students to reach my full potential. Success isn't defined by what grad job you get or how much you earn, it's the relationships you build along the way

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Objective 4: Develop and Support Student Wellbeing

Flinders students have identified that developing their own wellbeing is part of success, not just a means to success. We understand that there can be many challenges to our health and wellbeing while at university, and that these issues can create obstacles to academic success. We will listen and seek to understand the challenges students face, providing accessible and responsive support. We will develop an awareness of our own and others' wellbeing, and help students build strategies to support wellbeing across their life.

Strategies

- 4.1 We will develop in collaboration with the Flinders community a university wide wellbeing strategy that includes physical, financial, and psychological wellbeing for staff and students.
- 4.2 We will provide high quality wellbeing support services that are visible, accessible and utilised by students, both on campus and online.
- 4.3 We will develop clear processes and information about wellbeing that will be accessible to staff when providing support to students.
- 4.4 We enable students' understanding of their own wellbeing and provide strategies to improve wellbeing in targeted and personalised ways.
- 4.5 We will strengthen community awareness of wellbeing and celebrate diverse stories of student and staff wellbeing, resilience and success.
- 4.6 We will support the development of student and staff wellbeing knowledge through co-curricular and curriculum embedded approaches including availability of micro credentials.

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Success means the creation/sense of community. A campaign on mental health like the consent campaign. Creative green spaces, more engagement from senior leadership with students. Visibility of mental health services improved. Appreciation for gaining the student voice

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Objective 5: A Responsive and Navigable Learning Environment

Success at university is often impacted by how easily students can access what they need, when they need it, and how they need it. At Flinders we will create physical, virtual, relational and administrative environments that are easy to navigate and are responsive to student life and learning.

Strategies

- 5.1 We will be a community that is relationally responsive and navigable by fostering mutual respect, empathy, and kindness.
- 5.2 We will provide students with the experience of a single, integrated, high quality digital learning environment.
- 5.3 We will establish a formal distributed leadership network to coordinate support for student success in and across portfolios, colleges, and learning environments.
- 5.4 We will provide students with targeted information and advice.
- 5.5 We will develop multiple exit and reentry pathways for students.
- 5.6 Students will have access to high quality support services that are visible and accessible on each campus and online.
- 5.7 We will implement the Flinders Education Quality Framework to ensure quality and navigable student experience across curriculum and Flinders Learning Online.
- 5.8 We will provide students with clear feedback on their academic progress and timely, personalised support when they experience difficulties.
- 5.9 We will engage in dialogue with staff and students on their experience of Flinders, include them in developing solutions, and providing information back to them on how their ideas are actioned.

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Success at Flinders University means being prepared for the workforce, having the skills both discipline specific and more broadly to succeed. More programs orientated in marketing oneself and communication would be great both online and offline.

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Recommended Actions for Implementation of the Retention Strategy 2020-2025

1. Redesign of Student Academic Progress Support Process.

We recommend a redesign of the student academic progress support process (encapsulating data analytic based approaches to early disengagement, academic 'at risk' processes, student contact and support, show cause processes, and student progress/completion).

- 1.1 Redefining progress for Flinders University. Returning to main goals for student success and considering regulatory requirements in the context of supporting student success.
- 1.2 Review student lifecycles and identify key inhibitors to student retention and success and when they occur.
- 1.3 Consider the role of learning analytics in this process, and establish processes that can be developed as technology improves.
- 1.4 Redesign process of support for student progress in a way that leverages College and Portfolio structures and personnel and establishes Flinders as a sector leader in student support.

2. Develop a Coordinated Formal Distributed Leadership Model of Student Success

We recommend further emphasis on leadership, collaboration, and development via consistent university wide structure and roles. These will provide a basis on which the rest of this plan can be implemented, evaluated and evolved.

- 2.1 Establish University wide working groups for Employability, Wellbeing, and Retention with leadership across, and coordination between, working groups. These groups will be able to draw from the recommendations provided within this document and further develop these key areas.
- 2.2 Establish College based Student Success Working Groups (see Appendix A). These groups will provide structure for leadership, planning, and implementation of student success programs across Colleges, and collaboration with portfolios.
- 2.3 Embed a students as partners development officer, potentially within the Student Experience team, to partner with the colleges and help embed students as partners across the institution.
- 2.4 Develop Student Academic and Wellbeing Advisors. These roles would: be college based; aligned with SAS teams, with experience and training to provide guidance to students; support wellbeing and academic needs, and be connected to college and portfolio networks to or to triage these needs to appropriate supports (e.g. Flinders Connect, SAS, Health, Counselling and Disability, Yunggorendi, International Student Services, Careers); be conduits for upskilling college based staff; support student success activities including orientations and student contact; case manage complex student cases; and be available and accessible to students.
- 2.5 Invest in leadership, planning and development with an annual university planning and development day for student success and focussed sessions for celebration and professional development during Learning and Teaching Week.

3. Implement Quality Teaching Improvements to Support Transition and Success

We recommend continued and improved focus on teaching quality, as the curriculum continues to be the primary influence on the student experience.

- 3.1 Implement and leverage the Flinders Education Quality framework for review and improvement within Colleges. We recommend a focus on the scaffolding of skills across the entire degree (with a focus on courses with below 85% retention), and quality teaching and transition pedagogy particularly in the first year.
- 3.2 Review and embed strategies to support retention, wellbeing, employability and student partnerships in curriculum across all years of teaching.
- 3.3 Make efforts to support student success normative, easy, and rewarding for both academic and professional staff. Consider levers of teaching and learning grants, awards, peer review, workloads, and professional development.

4. Coordinate and Design Online Quality Digital Experience to Support Student Success

We recommend a holistic review of the digital experience of our students focussed on student success.

- 4.1 Develop a holistic vision of the digital campus as the place where both students and staff live and learn.
- 4.2 Prioritise the virtual environment as much as we do the physical environment.
- 4.3 Design an online orientation experience of high quality that can be utilised by anyone and keeps in mind those unfamiliar with university or unable to access on campus supports (first-in-family, remote access, low entry scores, international students both off shore, and onshore but yet to arrive).
- 4.4 Improve the accessibility and use of support services, and continue engaging dialogue with students on their experience.

5. Develop a University Wide Wellbeing Plan that Encompasses Financial, Psychological and Physical wellbeing.

- 5.1 Flinders will develop a University wide wellbeing plan that encompasses staff and students (Higher Education Standard Framework 2.3, 6.14 and the Higher Education Standards Panel 2019, Recommendation 8). This can be developed in a way consistent with leading best practice (e.g. the Okanagan Charter, Orygen 2020 recommendations, MCSHE Framework for Promoting Student Mental Wellbeing in Universities) and give consideration to leadership and planning, institutional culture, wellbeing awareness and professional development of staff and students, early recognition and support, and crisis management.

6. Celebrate Student Success, Community and Collaborations

We will tell stories of students' success, community, and collaborations to further develop our student centred culture.

- 6.1 Embed diverse stories of student success in both inward and outward facing communication strategies.
- 6.2 Celebrate the inspiring role of staff in supporting student success.
- 6.3 Celebrate student partnerships and collaboration.
- 6.4 Increase visibility and accessibility of initiatives developing students' experience of community.

