

Culture at the Centre: Creating welcoming spaces and positive learning experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

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Cultural security is essential to increasing Indigenous Australian student participation (Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, 2005; Rochecouste, Oliver, & Bennell, 2014), and whilst Aboriginal studies centres provide safe and welcoming environments for students with positive results (Anderson, Bunda, & Walter, 2008), there is a growing need to expand cultural safety across all faculties to aid retention and increase the number of graduates (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, & Kelly, 2012). This workshop will explore how the Indigenous Engagement Team from the Faculty of Health Sciences at Curtin University facilitate cultural security through their approach to working with Indigenous students and non-Indigenous staff. Through giving culture a voice—and by placing it at the centre of their practice—the Team are influencing how the Faculty and staff are responding to Indigenous Australian students' needs. The workshop will provide an overview of the range of projects the Indigenous Engagement Team are working on as well as practical strategies on how to work in a culturally inclusive and secure manner. Participants will be engaged in a yarning process to explore culturally secure ways to respond to real-life student experiences with practical application to their areas. Through the student case study activities, participants will develop a deeper understanding of the way the Team works in alignment with Aboriginal ways of being, knowing and doing. As a result, participants will build their capacity to understand culturally secure processes, create appropriate learning experiences, and be responsive and flexible, thereby aiding student progression and retention.

References

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