



# Student Experience Evaluation Project: Early Findings

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# Aims

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- Gather additional feedback from students about their learning/teaching experience.
- Identify areas of strength/weakness.
- Feedback our findings to students.
- Make recommendations to the Faculty.



# Method

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- Mixed-method:
  - focus group
  - one-on-one interviews
  - written submissions



# Participants

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- Focus group: 18 representatives from B.Ed (Primary); B.Ed (Secondary), B.Ed/BA; M.Teach; B.ScWk.
- One-on-one interviews: Non-Indigenous  
3 x B.Ed (Primary), 1 x BA/B.Ed
- Five one-on-one interviews with Indigenous students



# Findings: Non-Indigenous

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- Disparity in teaching quality:

*“Some teachers are just going through the motions... You can tell the teachers who are really concerned about how you do and really go out of their way to make it possible for you to get through well.”*

*“Do as they say and not as they do - lecturers that is!”*



# Findings: Non-Indigenous

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- Concern over Honours:

*“The course has been thrown together last minute and teachers have acknowledged that.”*

*“We haven’t even had a meeting, a year meeting, ever, just to sit down and say: ‘This is what’s expected of you; this is the process that you’re going to have to go through.’ Everyone’s been told something different.”*



# Findings: Non-Indigenous

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- How does the Faculty value prac?

*“Why are assessments due when some people are on prac, when I’ve been told for the past four years that prac is my first and foremost priority?”*

*“My first prac was two suburbs away. We didn’t get anyone who came to our school ... And then, in my rural one [prac], I had a supervisor who called me three times, couldn’t get in contact with me ... and she never called again.”*



# Findings: Non-Indigenous

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- Inconsistent and/or meaningless marking criteria:

*“There doesn’t seem to be any consistency of markers coming together and deciding what an HD is, deciding what each thing is, and marking accordingly. It appears that there are very lenient markers and very harsh markers, and you may get that harsh marker three times, and there goes your whole mark for the course.”*

*“XXX course, tutors saying different things, nobody seemed to know what they were doing, tutor was rude in response to email enquiries, but no criteria set. There was a heading - ‘detailed lesson plans’ - but no description of what that means.”*



# Findings: Non-Indigenous

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- Workload issues:

*“XXX was 4 credit point, but they still expect the same - if not more - workload as a 6 credit point subject. The first assignment took me the longest of any assignment I’ve ever done - hours and hours. And there were three huge assignments and they all took a really long time and I just thought it was a bit of a joke.”*

*“If we’re given a 2000 word limit, what they really mean is a minimum of 2000 words, but what they actually mean is the more you do the better the mark.”*



# Non-Indigenous Students

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- ‘I’m someone who knows nothing about it and it’s not because of who I vote for. I would describe myself as really left wing. I never got taught anything at school. We didn’t have any Aboriginal kids at school. And I never did a single subject or had a single lecture about it in my four years at uni and I know nothing. And so if I were confronted with an Aboriginal student in my class room wouldn’t know how to talk to them. I wouldn’t know what to teach and I would be too scared to ask someone or tell someone that I don’t know anything because people will look at you like you’re ignorant and its not because I don’t want to know. It’s not to say that I don’t think it’s important. That perspective has never come into contact with me and I was shocked because at uni we didn’t do it. Because every single educator needs to know about it.



# Non-Indigenous student feedback

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- Learning the history of Indigenous Australia can break down stereotypes
- ‘It’s a delicate subject but don’t you agree that at least learning that history can break down stereotype. Just knowing the history can make someone who might be prejudiced without knowing it change. It might change their view which then will influence their teaching practises which will then benefit Indigenous students.’



# Non-Indigenous Students

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- Student difficulties in raising sensitive issues

‘After the first session we all wanted to raise so many issues and so many different things and we didn’t feel like we could. We didn’t feel like it was politically correct to ask some of the questions we wanted to ask so a lot of us felt that it was a waste of time because she knew our names, our names were going on our assignments. If one of us wanted to ask something that was a little controversial or that she could find offensive we weren’t going to ask that question and we all said it at the end of the first semester that we felt gagged and that the whole thing was a waste of time. Because we felt we had to be politically correct there was no free and open communication going on in that tut group. That is a shame because that’s what uni should be about and in the faculty of education and social work I don’t think many people feel free to voice their opinions which go contrary to the left wing (opinions) of the faculty which is a shame.’



# Non Indigenous Student Feedback

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- Lack of staff support in choosing Indigenous elective

‘Someone who used to run my program actually used to say to people to choose that subject because it didn’t have an exam. So when I went to that subject I thought this is really good, they are really opening their minds. Then I found out that they were being advised to do that subject because it was an easy subject and I was absolutely outraged. But this is coming from someone who is in a power position within the uni. So it’s never encouraged that students do anything to do with Aboriginal studies.’



# Indigenous Student feedback

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- Positive Human Movement staff feedback – approachable
- Positive feedback on Human Movement programming

‘ We have a wonderful teaching staff in the Human Movement program. I have always felt able to email and ask questions or approach my lecturers in person. They are always willing to answer any questions or discuss any teaching and learning issues I may have.’

‘I have to say that our timetable is always very accommodating for working casual jobs or plenty of personal study time. Most of my classes are without breaks which eliminate the temptation of skipping the last class or wasting time in between classes. In terms of workload, it is generally reasonable with few exams which makes it more heavily assessment based, however I must say that doing honours alongside regular classes makes for a large workload.’



# Indigenous Student Feedback

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- Excellent coverage of Indigenous Issues within Human Movement Program
- Honours research focus on Indigenous adolescents has led to deep learning  
Involvement in AIME beneficial to students
- Practical Experiences Teaching Indigenous students increased learning

‘We have revisited Indigenous learning, education and socio-cultural issues, health, injustices, history, plus more throughout the past 4 years across various subjects and in several contexts. I have also found that I have learnt a lot through my practicum experiences teaching Indigenous students. Further to that, as part of my studies I have chosen to pursue Honours research As part of this I have furthered my knowledge ...through extensive reading and interactions with Indigenous adolescents. Coming to uni has most certainly increased my awareness of Indigenous issues.’

- Compulsory Indigenous subject for Human Movement program

‘I would support any decisions to make a compulsory subject for human movement students which require us to learn more extensively about Indigenous issues. involvement in the AIME or similar programs would also be beneficial.’



# Non-Indigenous student feedback

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- Need for practical strategies for teaching Indigenous students

‘I really want to know how I as a teacher can actually get in the class room and make a difference’



# Indigenous Student Feedback

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- Positive feedback on Outdoor Education program

‘Outdoor education has been my favourite subject. Not many subjects at university allow you to experience field trips out into the bush learning about Australian history and culture through experiential learning.’

- Assessment/Poor feedback from lecturers

‘Lecturers don’t make actual time to do that feed back loop. They talked about do as you say quality teaching. The quality teaching framework is in the feedback loop. The teachers to me look like they are not planning and organizing well enough and they are not going the feed back loop with their instruction and the actual teaching is not in the cycle.’



# Indigenous Student feedback

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- Mentoring for Indigenous students

‘In my course there is a course coordinator but no liaison person. I remember when I first started here I had a liaison person at the Koori centre. This really helped. Someone to talk to. I was lucky I had a mentor. That was amazing. It helped one on one. It helped me because I found the person that I could relate to. If you encourage the students to find a mentor.’

‘Mentoring got me through. Being able to sms or phone my mentor was so helpful. The mentors don’t need to be Aboriginal but they do need to have an awareness of social history and the impact of invasion on Aboriginal people. They need to understand these issues.’



# Indigenous Student Feedback

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Non- Teacher trained tutors modelling  
poor quality teaching

‘Tutors that may be PHD students but  
half of them are not teacher trained.  
They may have the knowledge base but  
they don’t know how to actually teach.’



# Indigenous Student Feedback

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- Indigenous stereotyping - positive messages about Indigenous people

‘It’s important that Indigenous education students are not highlighted as having deficiencies and not be shown to be disabled in some way.’

‘Its a fine line between actually understanding Indigenous issues and understanding what it is happening and also creating your own stereotypes. If all these people just hear all these statistics and information then that’s just reaffirming some things, especially in Sociology. We are trying to break down the stereotypes. If you have all these negative issues without having positive issues. We want to change it with people going away with some type of positive experience and with people going away and thinking we have to change this. Empowering people.’



# Indigenous Student feedback

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Indigenous education is a shared task

‘Indigenous education is not black fella business. It is a business of crossed hands. White hands can assist Indigenous students to succeed and black hands can assist white communities to understand. Black hands give specific knowledge and white hands assist and lend helping hands for our people to succeed. Not dictating. Helping. Providing Time. Seeking funding. Sourcing capital in a sea of hands, black and white. Together.’