



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

# **Narrabundah College**

Report of Review, 2020

Date of School Review: 12, 13, 14 and 15 October 2020  
Principal of Review School: Kerrie Grundy

*National School Improvement Tool Review Report* prepared by:

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***Report of Review, 2020*** prepared by:

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Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

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## Foreword

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2020 has been characterised by extreme weather events and the COVID-19 pandemic. ACT public schools, as community hubs, have been greatly impacted by these events. Despite this, they have continued to deliver high quality education to all students whilst also supporting their communities.

As noted further in this document, school improvement in the ACT is based on a five-year cycle. School Review (Review) considers the entire journey a school has undertaken during this period.

### Impact of COVID-19 on School Review

Findings from Review are based on what external and local experts read, see and hear in a school. In preparing findings from Review consideration has been given to the rapid response ACT public schools undertook for the COVID-19 home learning period, and the impact this had on observed practices and processes.

Additionally, due to travel restrictions some Lead Reviewers from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) were unable to lead Reviews on the ground. In these cases streaming technologies, and the support of experienced ACT reviewers, enabled the review to continue. Careful attention was given to ensuring the Review methodology and findings were not compromised.

☒ This Review had an on-the-ground Lead Reviewer from [ACER](#).

OR

☐ This Review had a Remote Lead Reviewer from [ACER](#).

## Overview of the School Review process

Approximately a fifth of all ACT public schools are reviewed each year. Reviews provide quality, independent, feedback tailored to individual school contexts. Findings from Review support annual implementation of a school's 5-year School Improvement Plan.

Reviews are undertaken by a team of experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) and are led by a Lead Reviewer from the Australian Council of Educational Research. Review Team size depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of a school.

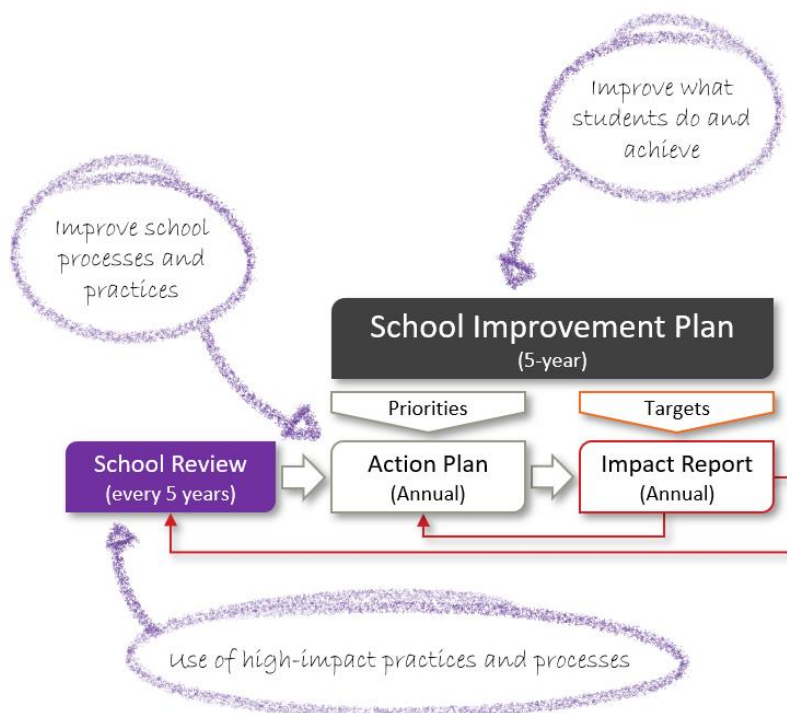
Through the lens of the NSIT, an internationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices, reviewers gain an accurate picture of current school practices. During Review evidence provided by schools is considered alongside evidence gathered through consultation with staff, students, parents and community members.

Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school communities.

The *Report of Review* includes detailed findings for each of the nine Domains of the National School Improvement Tool, as well as Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations for continued school improvement.

### Where does Review sit within the school improvement cycle?

ACT public schools utilise systematic integration of evidence and data collection, access and analysis to inform sharp and narrow 5-year School Improvement Plans. Annually, all schools utilise a suite of tools to expand, monitor and report on these priorities. Additionally, schools are provided differentiated support and feedback by internal and external experts. School Review is one way that this differentiated feedback is provided and typically occurs at the end of the 5-year school improvement cycle.



## What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

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### Commendations

Commendations highlight positive actions the school has taken over its last improvement cycle. Typically, these actions are either complete, or embedded in school practice.

### Affirmations

Affirmations verify specific actions being undertaken by the school that are impacting positively on school improvement. These actions are typically either not yet complete and/or not yet embedded.

### Recommendations

Recommendations provide the school with evidence-based advice regarding high-value areas for future school improvement efforts. Drawn from the NSIT, recommendations are key to the school effectively implementing its 5-year School Improvement Plan.

## NSIT Domain 1: An explicit improvement agenda

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### Domain descriptor

*The school leadership team and/or governing body have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.*

### Findings

- The *Narrabundah College Strategic Plan 2016-2020* is available on the college website and outlines three strategic priorities: Develop assessment strategies to improve student outcomes; Improve student use of feedback to enhance their learning; and Improve the quality of teaching and learning to enhance student outcomes. The first priority has a target for 100% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to be awarded the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate. All other targets refer to planned strategies rather than student outcomes.
- A poster of the college strategic agenda for 2019-20 could be seen in many areas around the college. The plan was presented at a staff meeting earlier this year.
- The work of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Teacher Performance and Development Plans (TPDPs) are aligned to the strategic agenda of the college.
- Teachers were able to describe their role in the development of the improvement agenda and their involvement in individual, group or faculty activities around assessment, feedback and teacher professional practice. Most teachers displayed a high level of commitment to the improvement agenda with some citing significant examples of change in teaching practice. There was less evidence of teachers making direct connection of their work on the strategic agenda to improvement in student outcomes.
- Students could describe teachers providing an increased level of feedback.
- The strategic agenda is described in newsletters and on the college website. College Board reports outline the required information to be provided to the college community. The Impact Reports for 2018 and 2019 are on the college website and describe changes in student perception data over time.
- Parents interviewed recalled ongoing briefings of the P&C and the Board by the college principal. Board members talked about the work the leadership team did to involve the whole community in the development of the strategic plan.

## NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

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### Domain descriptor

*A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests, measures of growth across the years of school.*

### Findings

- Currently, data analysis is being undertaken predominantly at the course level. There was less evidence of data driving strategic decision-making.
- In general, academic performance has been the focus of staff discussions. There are strong processes in place to analyse performance data.
- Course data analysis is primarily driven by individual teacher expertise. The review team observed that teacher skills in the use of data were uneven across the college.
- Teachers reported that they work quickly to assess the starting capabilities of year 11 students through a variety of means. This includes quick quizzes, short assessment pieces, access to NAPLAN year 9 data and to transition data. Staff acknowledged some gaps in data sets currently available, particularly for students entering the college.
- Data on current student performance is maintained and is available, as is data on the special needs of students. The review team noted that efforts are being made to make these data more easily accessible to staff.
- Classroom use of data varies across the college. The availability and strategic use of this data was less obvious.
- The most apparent data sets being used by teachers relate to student academic performance and to students with identified needs. Data in relation to staff perceptions is available in the college, as is data on student belonging, engagement and other domains of wellbeing. There is little evidence of using this data to drive strategic planning over time or in relation to resource allocation.
- While parents reported a strong understanding of the college's ATAR performance they were less aware of general student performance.

## NSIT Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning

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### Domain descriptor

*The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.*

### Findings

- The college enjoys a strong and affirmed community reputation anchored in a learning culture that promotes high expectations, intellectual rigour and striving for excellence.
- Students, staff, and parents speak positively about the respectful and caring relationships that are evident across the college. The college presents as a calm environment for learning where there are very few behaviour issues that impact on learning.
- In classrooms, the review team observed that students were focused, committed and engaged with their learning. Student reflections were that there is a significant competitive climate within the college, and this is having both positive and negative impacts on student learning and wellbeing.
- Teachers presented as being strongly committed to the success of their students. Students commented that teachers genuinely care about them and go out of their way to support them. The review team noted beyond class supports, such as tutorials and hubs being made available. These are well patronised.
- The college has a cultural diversity that reflects its international programs (International Baccalaureate (IB), French Baccalaureat, and International Private Students Program) and its focus on students being part of an international community.
- Narrabundah College was the first school to offer the International Baccalaureate.
- Over half of the staff have been trained in cultural integrity and as a result, events such as the Australian Dream day were seen by students and staff as positive recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
- Students commented that diversity is valued and that “you can be yourself” at this college.
- There are several student groups, supported by staff, which foster and encourage student leadership. An example of this is the Interact club. Opportunities for the student voice to make contributions to learning, to the college environment, and to the wider community were also evident.
- The college has eight formal points of contact with parents to discuss student learning. An active P&C and Board connect with the wider parent body.
- Satisfaction data and review team observations point to staff morale being high.



## NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

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### Domain descriptor

*The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.*

### Findings

- The college has wide-ranging information on students who have transitioned from local public high schools. Information on students transferring from other schools is more limited. Generally, transition data are used more by student services staff than by classroom teachers.
- The student services team conduct a check of year 11 student grades at the end of session 1. The check is designed to gather information about students who are at risk of not meeting the requirements of their course. Interventions are put in place as appropriate, and parents are involved if course changes are required.
- Additionally, the mathematics faculty conducts a skills test early in year 11 as part of ongoing course counselling and placement.
- Guidelines have been provided to allow teachers to refer students at risk to student services and as appropriate refer students to the college psychologist for support.
- Student services staff provide teachers with the required accommodations to meet student needs, such as Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), student safety plans and changes to assessment requirements.
- Some students who are identified as having English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) are afforded targeted assessment concessions by the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies. The college has EAL/D trained teachers who closely monitor targeted students. For other EAL/D students there is an expectation that their needs are met by classroom teachers.
- A hub has been established to allow targeted students to study in an alternative setting with additional support. A further hub has been established to provide all students with support, mentoring and study skills. Both hubs are staffed by paid tutors who are often alumni of the college.
- In 2019, 50 year 11 students were offered places in the Australian National University (ANU) extension program, and 51 year 12 students completed their chosen course.
- The career and transitions staff have an annual plan to maximise transition, and course selection and work experience programs to provide appropriate pathways for each student.
- A 'Learning Village' of transportable classrooms was created in 2017/18 to temporarily replace old buildings. Planning for the provision of permanent facilities is underway. Across the college, the layout of learning spaces tended to be traditional.

## NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

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### Domain descriptor

*The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.*

### Findings

- Individual teacher professional goal setting and development is privileged at the college. In their TPDPs, teachers align one of their goals to the college improvement priorities and engage in PLC action research activities as part of their professional growth.
- PLCs are formed across faculties, allowing for the sharing of teacher practices beyond their teaching area. There is some sharing of the outcomes of PLC activities with other PLCs and more broadly across the college.
- The college has a long-standing practice of formal classroom observations that evolved from the Quality Teaching model (QTm). All school leaders are actively engaged in understanding individual teacher practice, in providing constructive feedback on teacher practice as part of their growth. The review team observed that teachers were open to the feedback provided.
- The PLC model has recently incorporated three-person teams who commit to observing each other's classes, as part of their exploration of a pedagogical focus. Teachers spoke of observing different teaching strategies in other learning areas, trying these strategies, and then evaluating them. Across the college there is strong support for the PLC model and for what it provides individual and teams of teachers.
- School leaders recruit teachers with subject matter expertise and strong pedagogy. This is complemented with observed high levels of teacher passion for what they teach.
- The college benefits from in-house educational expertise, with many staff holding significant postgraduate qualifications. There are some indications of this expertise being shared across the staff and of it being the basis for time allocation with whole-school responsibility.
- New educators and new appointees to the college are provided with mentors in their teaching areas. Faculty-based induction processes ensure new staff are provided with just-in-time guidance and mentoring in their practice. There was universal support for the approach.
- Teachers delivering the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum maintain currency through attendance at IB workshops. Perception of teacher efficacy for having the exposure to, and confidence in, the IB approach was high. The integration of IB with the ACT senior secondary curriculum is allowing staff to transfer expertise for the benefit of all students.

## NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

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### Domain descriptor

*The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidence-based teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and families.*

### Findings

- The college is host to three authorised curricula - the French Baccalaureat, the IB, and the Australian Curriculum, as authorised in the ACT for senior secondary students. Each of these is contributing to the broad course choice available to students.
- The three curricula are thoroughly planned for and resourced. The French Baccalaureat is largely a self-contained cohort within the college. The IB and the Australian Curriculum courses are delivered in an integrated way. The majority of classes have students accessing both curricula at the same time. Teachers are planning for the requisite course elements and ensuring assessment adheres to the relevant framework.
- Teachers and students commented on the benefits of the integrated approach, the workload, and associated pressures of dual certification.
- The college community is strongly supportive of the diversity of the curriculum offerings. It remains a reputational drawcard and many families across the ACT choose the college for this reason.
- The college has well-established course moderation processes in place.
- The college offers a rich suite of nine languages to students. In 2019, 500 of the 945 students studied a second language.
- Teachers delivering the IB curriculum are drawing links between the IB learner profiles to the general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum. An example of the exploration of a cross-curricula perspective (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture) is the Australian Dream day event, which explored reconciliation issues facing contemporary Australian society.
- There is evidence of flexible curriculum delivery options at the college, with the availability of minors, half units, and external courses (in particular, the ANU extension program). Students and parents speak positively about these opportunities.

## NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

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### Domain descriptor

*The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.*

### Findings

- Throughout the college community there is a strong perception that the major form of differentiation of student learning is achieved through course selection. The review team observed pockets within courses of teaching aligned to individual student learning need. Further differentiation within courses by teachers appeared limited by access to sufficient data to quickly determine starting points for teaching.
- Numerous teachers described their use of formative assessment strategies in the classroom to check for student understanding and to monitor progress. This included the use of surveys, quizzes, concept maps, and exit tickets. Some of these teachers went on to articulate how they adjusted teaching programs to support student learning.
- Work has commenced within faculty teams to differentiate assessment tasks. Staff have described the use of scaffolding and rubrics to support student understanding of assessment requirements.
- Using available information, the student services team develop Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for students with identified needs. These plans are provided to teachers. There was some evidence of inconsistencies in the incorporation of these plans at the classroom level.
- The college has established processes to identify and support students requiring special consideration in assessment. These processes provide teachers with information about adjustments to task requirements and/or timings.
- Students reported that support services help them access the curriculum.
- Formal reporting to parents and students occurs three times a year. Comments are directed to the student and generally describe what they can do to improve their learning.

## NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

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### Domain descriptor

*The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods – including explicit instruction – to maximise student learning.*

### Findings

- College classes are characterised by deliberate and focused learning, with students experiencing challenge. Teachers take pride in unpacking the curriculum content in ways that maximise results for students.
- Teachers and leaders refer to elements of the QTM in their pedagogical approach. This is a long-standing practice at the college and over time, QTM has influenced teaching practice through classroom observations and feedback.
- IB teachers are required to identify pedagogical approaches consistent with the IB framework in their planning, and because of the integrated delivery model, they deploy those strategies for the benefit of all students in their classes.
- Assessment and the use of feedback by students have been improvement priorities for the college throughout this planning cycle. The review team cited a range of quality rubrics which allow students to know what they are expected to do, and in the feedback phase, what they need to do to improve.
- Many teachers are thinking about the pacing of the demonstration (or, explicit instruction) phase of teaching and the hands-on opportunities they provide students. Teachers are increasingly using shorter formative assessment cycles as part of their classroom practices, and students report high levels of engagement and enjoyment with this layer of their assessment.
- Action research into pedagogical practices is taking place in the context of TPDP goals and PLCs. At the faculty level, individual staff share their strategies and are open to learning from others. Teachers and leaders spoke of the potential for consideration of an agreed set of pedagogical practices for all teachers at the college.
- There is evidence of the transference of pedagogical strategies into the online learning environment via ICT, for example, the Google Suite and 'the Flipped Classroom'.

## NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

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### Domain descriptor

*The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the school. All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. Procedures are in place to ensure effective communications and to monitor and evaluate the intended impacts of the school's partnerships.*

### Findings

- The college has a number of 'partnerships' that are aligned to improving student outcomes and opportunities. In general, these arrangements have not been developed as part of a strategic intent.
- Some teaching areas have described strong partnerships with external experts and with organisations which are enhancing the learning experience of students. Examples include industry connections with content, assessment in the business studies courses, and cultural connections with embassies for students studying languages.
- The review team evidenced an emerging partnership with the college P&C which whilst centred on facilities, is moving into supporting student wellbeing. There is considerable variation of staff viewpoints as to how parents might best support the learning of students.
- The college offers a wide range of opportunities for student pathways. In general, there is a strong take up of these partnerships by students pursuing a tertiary pathway. Students reported varying levels of awareness of what was available for work and vocational pathways.

## Commendations

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- Narrabundah College is characterised by the high expectations held by the leadership team, teachers, administrative staff, students, and their parents and carers.
- There are genuine, respectful, and caring relationships amongst staff, students, and parents/carers. Staff show clear evidence of commitment to student learning outcomes and student wellbeing.
- The successful delivery of three endorsed curricula provides a breadth of opportunities for students and adds value to their learning. It is also positively impacting the nature of the teaching at the college.
- There is a high level of commitment to the recruitment, induction, and mentoring of new educators and new members of the teaching team.
- The prevailing teaching culture of the college is an openness to having practice observed. Teachers report high levels of satisfaction with the feedback gained. This open culture is being driven by the senior leadership of the college.

## Affirmations

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- The Narrabundah College Strategic Agenda (2016-2020) has been well communicated and is widely understood.
- Teachers are actively involved in the improvement agenda by their participation in the PLC structure and via their TPDP goals.
- There is a recognition across the college of the value of data and the contribution it can make to improving student outcomes.
- The resourcing of student services is providing guidance to students in relation to their learning pathways and wellbeing. Students believe that hubs across the college are effective in supporting their learning and wellbeing needs.
- The college values the student voice in their experience at Narrabundah.
- Teachers are developing and sharing rubrics to assist students to understand where they are in their learning and what they need to do to improve.
- Some teachers have a high degree of expertise in catering for individual needs in their classrooms.
- Many different parts of the school have established partnerships with community, business and other entities to improve outcomes for students. The P&C is working to develop partnerships with the broader parent community.

## Recommendations

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- Collaboratively develop a Narrabundah College Improvement Plan 2021-2025 with the wider college community, which:

- > is consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning
- > provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes that are derived from an analysis of school performance data over time
- > incorporates explicit targets, and
- > is monitored over the life of the plan, with progress communicated.
- Develop a data plan that incorporates a full range of college data (student achievement and wellbeing) that:
  - > clearly outlines the purpose of data at each level of the college as appropriate
  - > clarifies roles and responsibilities for the leaders, teachers and students in their use of data
  - > specifies how software can be easily used to support data analysis and communication at all levels, and
  - > provides opportunities for increasing the data literacy of school leaders and teachers as appropriate.
- Develop systemic processes to identify, cater for and monitor students, or groups of students, who have learning needs.
- Build upon the PLC model to collaboratively develop a whole-of-college professional learning plan to cater for the individual needs of each staff member, particularly in respect of the strategic agenda of the college. This should include a tailored approach to observation, feedback, mentoring and coaching of staff with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Develop a plan for curriculum delivery that provides a shared vision for curriculum practice that incorporates the use of general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities with particular reference to student personal and social capability, and critical and creative thinking, to drive curriculum delivery.
- Continue to develop staff capacity to respond to differences in cultural knowledge and experiences to cater for individual differences by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.
- Define common expectations of teaching and learning that are grounded in evidence-based research.
- Continue to develop or refine partnerships, particularly to support the strategic intent of the college.