



Transforming assessment through the Southern Cross Model: One university's shift to immersive teaching blocks

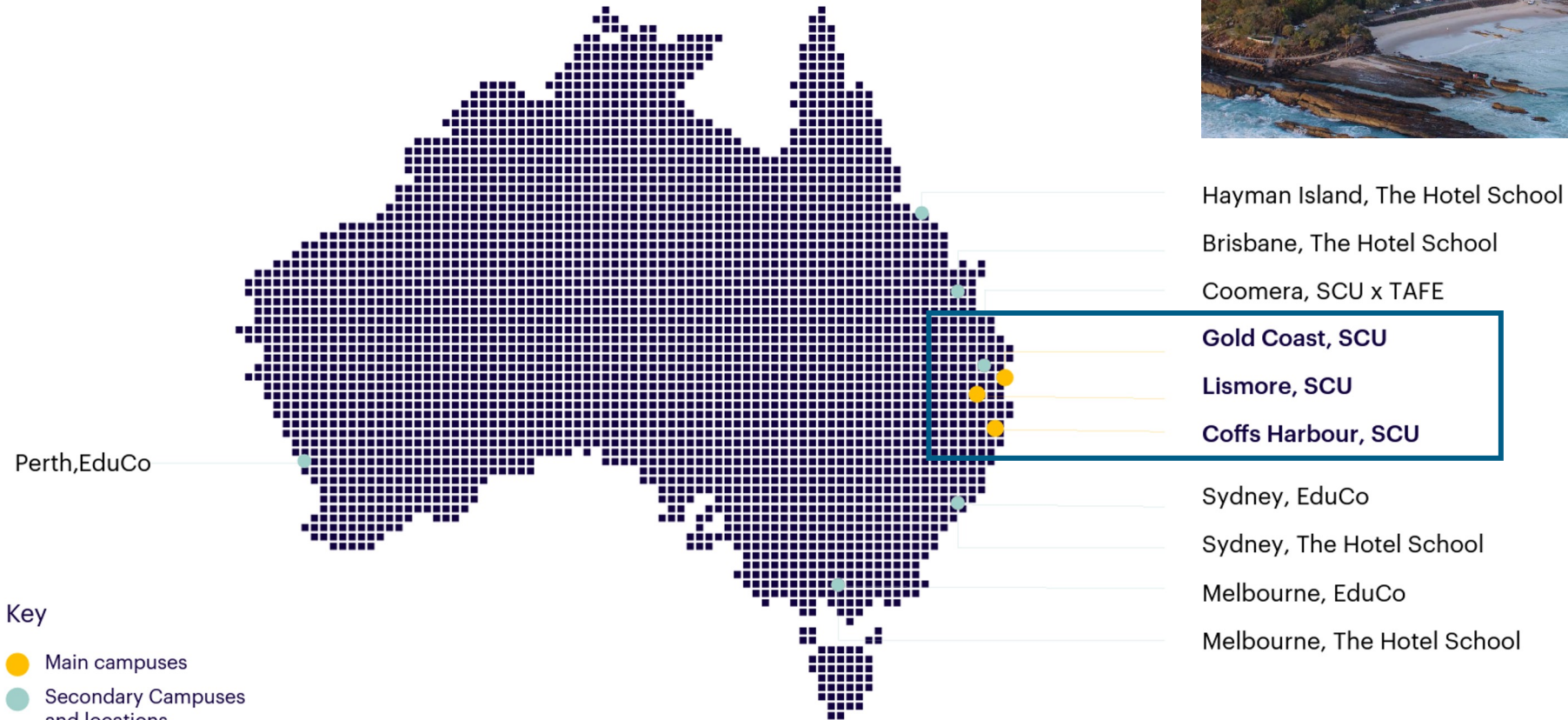
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Our context

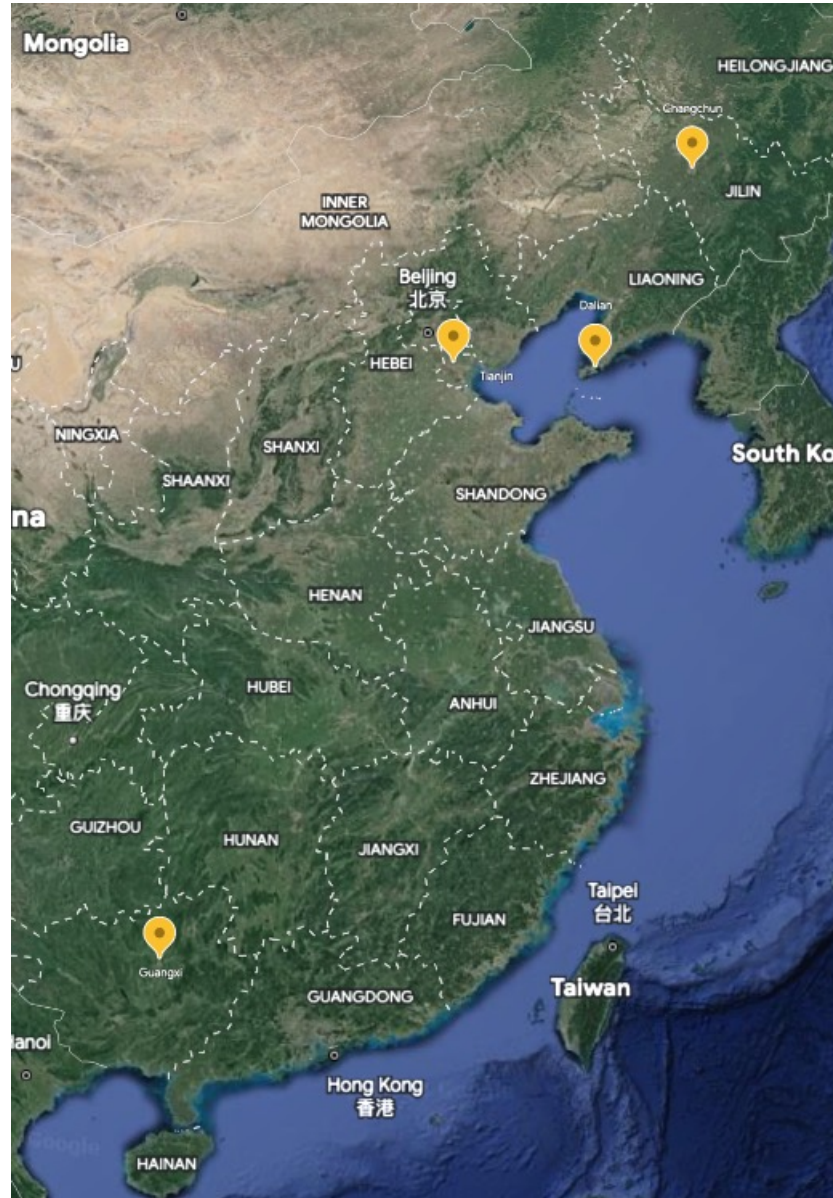




Our context

China: Dalian, Changchun, Tianjin, Liuzhou

Papua New Guinea: Port Moresby



Our students

69%

Women

65%

Part-time

57%

25 or older

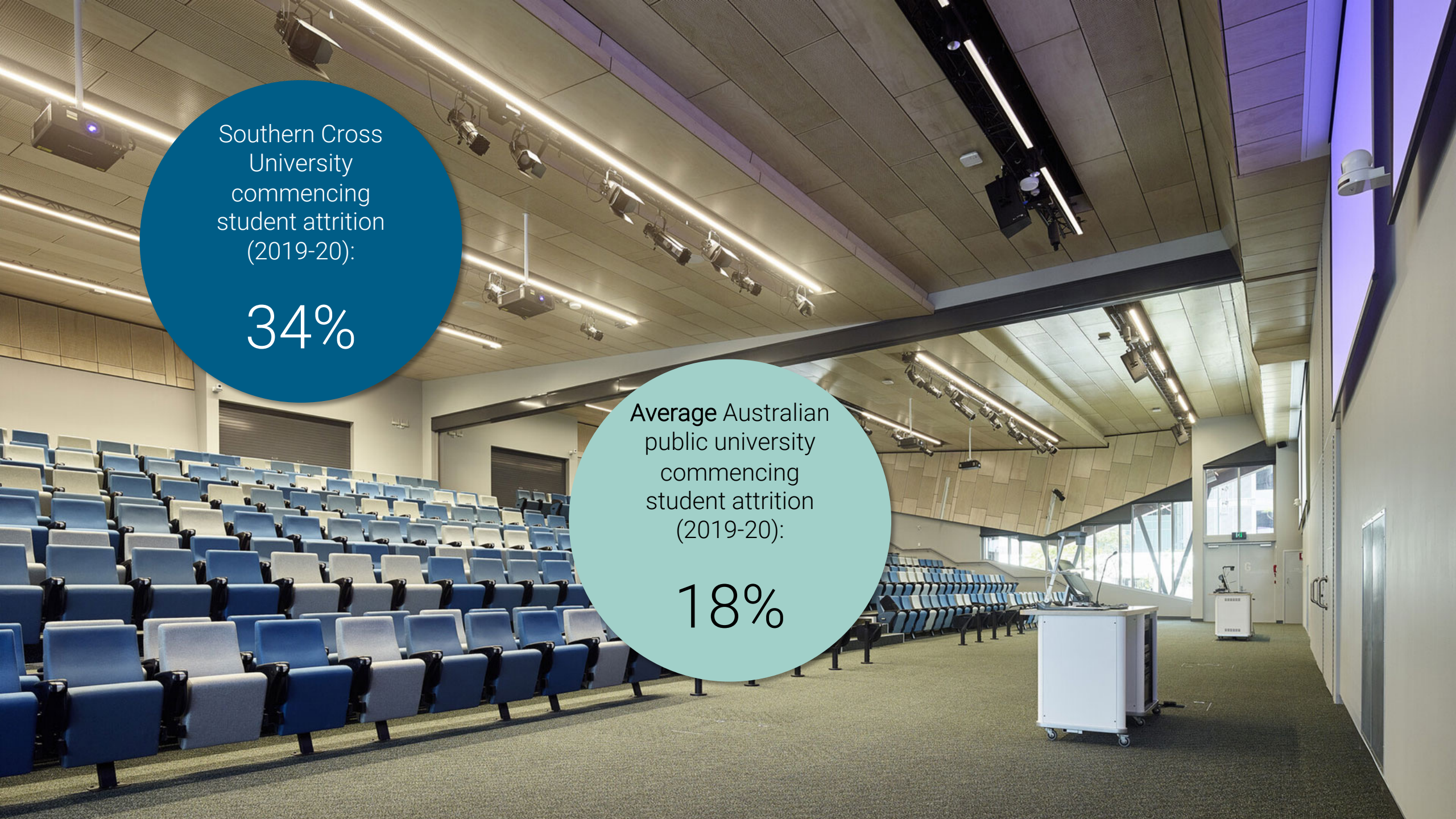
21%

International

5%

Aboriginal or Torres
Strait Islander





Southern Cross
University
commencing
student attrition
(2019-20):

34%

Average Australian
public university
commencing
student attrition
(2019-20):

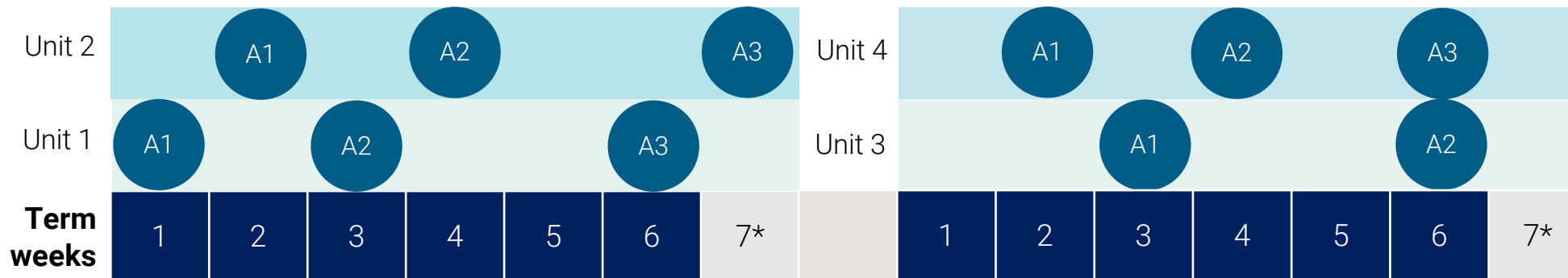
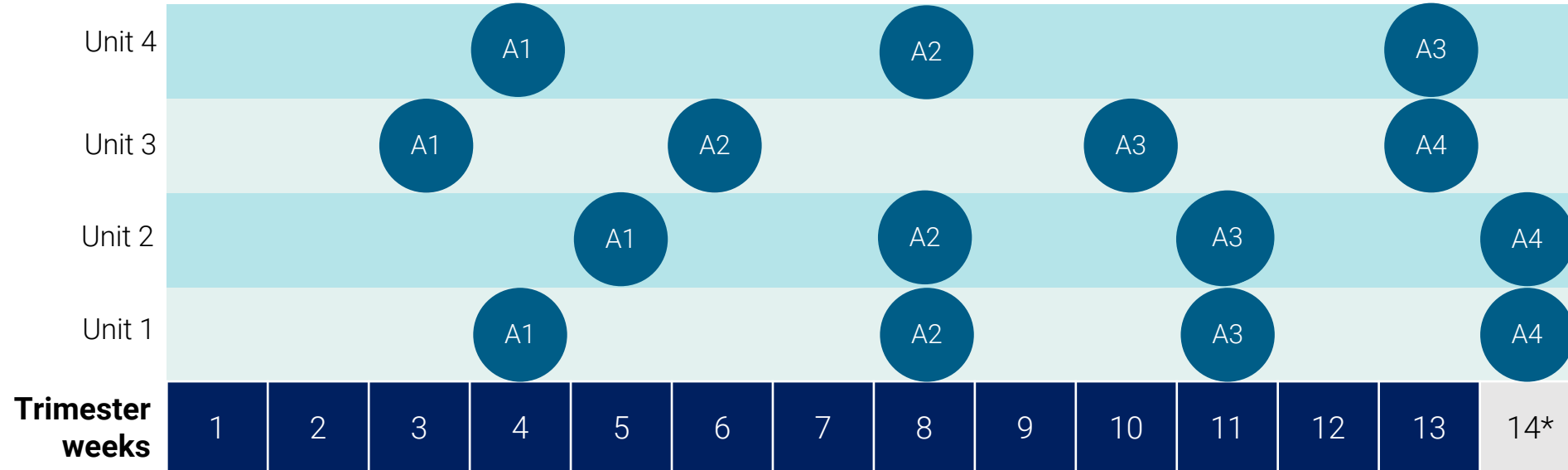
18%

Immersive / block models in higher education

- Southern Cross U:** Goode, E., Roche, T., Wilson, E., & McKenzie, J. W. (2023b). Implications of immersive scheduling for student achievement and feedback and feedback. *Studies in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2184472>
- Suffolk U:** Buck, E., & Tyrrell, K. (2022). Block and blend: A mixed method investigation into the impact of a pilot block teaching and blended learning approach upon student outcomes and experience. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 46(8), 1078–1091. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2022.2050686>
- Victoria U:** Loton, D., Stein, C., Parker, P., & Weaven, M. (2022). Introducing block mode to first-year university students: A natural experiment on satisfaction and performance. *Studies in Higher Education*, 47(6), 1097–1120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1843150>
- Plymouth U:** Turner, R., Webb, O. J., & Cotton, D. R. E. (2021). Introducing immersive scheduling in a UK university: Potential implications for student attainment. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(10), 1371–1384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1873252>
- Manchester Metropolitan U:** Nerantzi, C., & Chatzidamianos, G. (2020). Moving to block teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Management and Applied Research*, 7(4), 482–495. <https://doi.org/10.18646/2056.74.20-034>
- Liverpool John Moores U:** Dixon, L., & O’Gorman, V. (2020). ‘Block teaching’–exploring lecturers’ perceptions of intensive modes of delivery in the context of undergraduate education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 44(5), 583–595. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2018.1564024>
- Vietnamese-German U:** Yao, C. W., & Collins, C. (2019). Perspectives from graduate students on effective teaching methods: A case study from a Vietnamese Transnational University. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(7), 959–974. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2018.1429583>

Also **Colorado College, Cornell College, Tusculum College**. See: <https://vimeo.com/511210445>

Assessments in Trimesters vs. Terms



* Final assessment week for some units

A more focused way to learn . . .

“Having a focus point and knowing that’s where I’ve got to go. I think having more subjects on top of [two] would possibly come crashing down around me pretty quickly. Knowing what to prioritise, I would struggle with that.”

(Preparing for Success Program student)

“You get to focus really hard, then after that you can relax, that’s the reward at the end of each subject – a two-week break before the next terms starts. You can clean your mind and come back with new energy.”

(Bachelor of Business & Enterprise student)



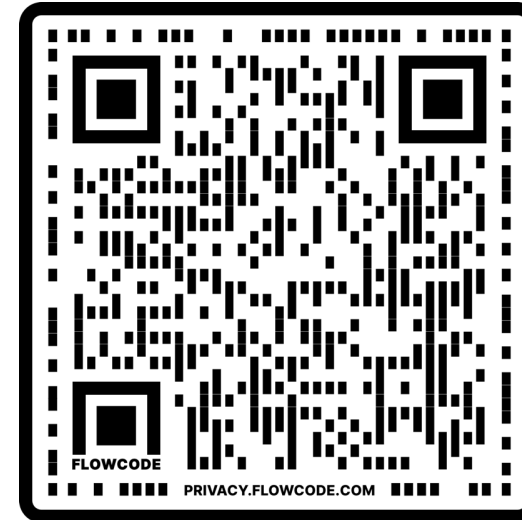
... and an active, guided way of learning

Guided self-access modules
6 per unit

Scheduled classes
2 per week

Authentic
assessments
max. 3 per unit

Constructive alignment, active learning pedagogy
(Biggs, 1999, 2014)



Why the Southern Cross Model:
How one university's curriculum
was transformed
(Roche et al., 2022)

A whole-of-university transformation

The Southern Cross Model

2021: 62 units

Non-Award, Civil Engineering, Business

2022: 533 units

Education, Science & Engineering,
Humanities, Arts & Social Science

2023: 323 units

Health, Law, Hotel School

Simplifying
student
academic
journey and
process

Teaching
calendar and
delivery

Centre for
Teaching
and Learning
uplift

Curriculum
design and
development

Assessment
policy &
practice

Academic
integrity
framework

Evaluation
and
monitoring

Policy framework for assessment design in the Southern Cross Model

Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy, clause 6:

Assessment is designed and developed to monitor, assess and support student progress in accordance with the following principles:

1. Assessment Principle 1: Assessment is designed for student learning, engagement and success.
2. Assessment Principle 2: Assessment is designed for the attainment of learning outcomes.
3. Assessment Principle 3: Assessment is fit for purpose and relevant to students.
4. Assessment Principle 4: Assessment is inclusive, fair, transparent and equitable.
5. Assessment Principle 5: Assessment incorporates timely, clear and constructive feedback.
6. Assessment Principle 6: Assessment maintains academic standards, assuring quality learning.

Core principles for assessment design in the Southern Cross Model

Designed for students to demonstrate and **achieve learning outcomes**

Authentic

e.g. performance-based, practice-based, industry-relevant, work-integrated, project-based, self-reflective, dilemma-based

Manageable

i.e. volume and timing is reasonable for both staff and students

Interlinked

e.g. scaffolded to build upon each other; progressive, connected, cumulative

Designed for **academic integrity**

e.g. individualised tasks, oral presentations, creative works, portfolios, reflective tasks

Linked to **learning activities**

e.g. portfolios constructed through completing module, class, field or work-integrated activities

Key elements for transformation: Assessment volume

Assessment, Teaching and Learning Procedures

<https://policies.scu.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00255>

Assessment load, weighting and distribution

- (20) Assessment is designed with an appropriate workload for staff and students, commensurate with the credit point weighting, length of the Teaching Period, and the Unit's Level of Study.
- (21) Normally, there will be no more than three summative assessment tasks set in a Unit, inclusive of any graded sub-tasks. Approval from the Associate Dean (Education) is required to include more than three summative tasks per unit.
- (22) The maximum weighting of any graded assessment task is 60% of the mark for the Unit.

Guide to Assessment Volume

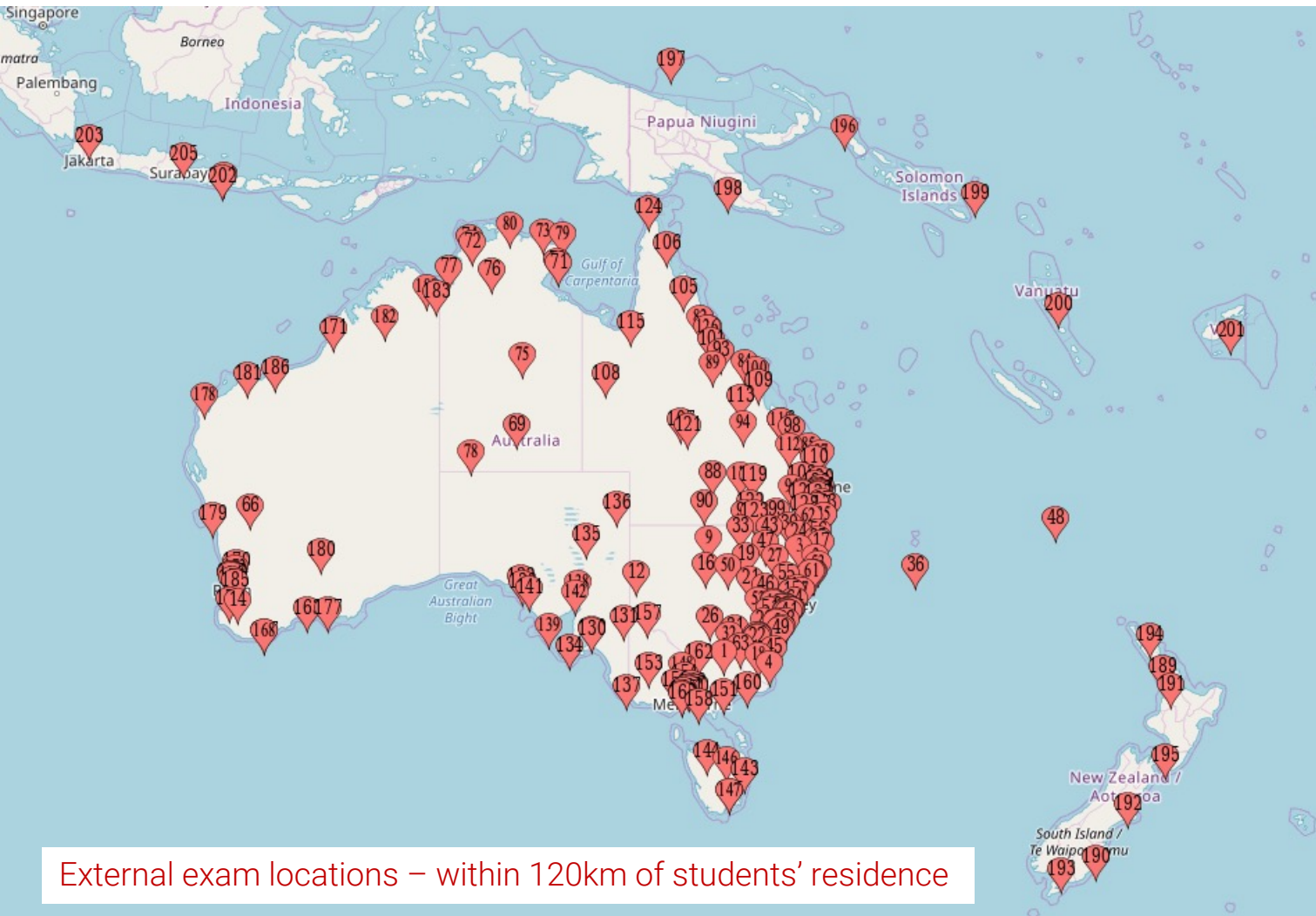
<https://spark.scu.edu.au/kb/tl/assess/guide-to-assessment-volume>

e.g. How much assessment is needed to achieve the ULOs?

Have you factored in the time and effort required for students to understand the expectations of the assessment, including rubrics and exemplars?

How much time and effort will be required to successfully prepare the assessment, both in terms of time spent, cognitive effort and achieving any necessary technical proficiency?

Key elements for transformation: Authentic assessment and examinations



Session 1, 2019 (pre-SCM and pre-COVID):

- 34% of units offered have exams
- 2,322 external exams, 99 external exam centres + 7 partner exam centres
- average 5 working days waiting for exams to come in from external exam centres

Also at:

Niue	Iraq	India
UK	Israel	Nepal
Ireland	Lebanon	Pakistan
Austria	Qatar	Sri Lanka
France	Saudi Arabia	Afghanistan
Germany	UAE	Uzbekistan
Netherlands	Cambodia	Canada
Switzerland	Thailand	USA
Norway	Vietnam	Argentina
Sweden	Malaysia	Brazil
Italy	Philippines	Chile
Spain	Singapore	Uruguay
Czech Republic	China	Mexico
Poland	Hong Kong	Jamaica
Russia	Taiwan	Trinidad
Ukraine	Japan	Mauritius
Egypt	South Korea	South Africa
	Bangladesh	Tanzania

Key elements for transformation: Authentic assessment and examinations

Assessment, Teaching and Learning Procedures

<https://policies.scu.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00255>

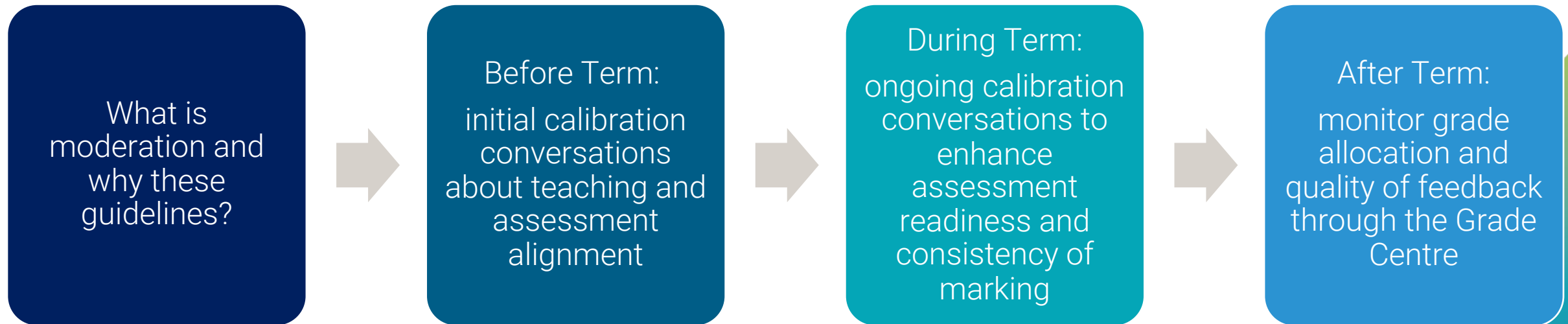
- (25) In the Southern Cross Model, authentic assessment tasks are preferred over examinations, as per clause (14).
- (26) Examinations must only be set as an assessment task where there are documented and justifiable external accreditation reasons approved by the relevant Associate Dean (Education) at the assessment design stage.
- (27) Where proctored examinations must be used, they will be held via an online proctoring service approved and supported by the University.
- (28) Examinations are managed and scheduled through the Faculty or College.
- (29) Non-proctored automated tests, online multiple-choice quizzes, and Blackboard quizzes should not normally be set as a major summative task (ie, more than 30% weighting). Approval from the Associate Dean (Education) is required to do so.

“Authentic Assessment – tasks that replicate or simulate real-world challenges, problems and standards of performance that students will typically face.”
(Assessment, Teaching and Learning Procedures, Clause 7c)

Key elements for transformation: Assessment moderation

Assessment Moderation Guidelines

<https://policies.scu.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=430>



“In essence, calibration involves effective communication through **academic conversations**. The aim of the process is to support and lead academics to be **confident** in: a) their own, and their colleagues', informed and calibrated **judgments** regarding students' progress towards achieving learning outcomes; and b) their own, and their colleagues', ability to make **transparent** and **qualitatively assured** appraisals of student work.”

(Assessment Moderation Guidelines, clause 7)

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Linked to **learning activities**

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Transforming student outcomes

End-of-unit student feedback survey Q: **“I am satisfied with the assessment tasks in this unit.”**

- increased from **80.8%** agreement in 2019 ($n = 2,444$) to **84.2%** agreement in 2021 ($n = 1,713$)
- a statistically significant improvement ($p = .004$)

End-of-unit student feedback survey Q: **“Overall, I am satisfied with this unit.”**

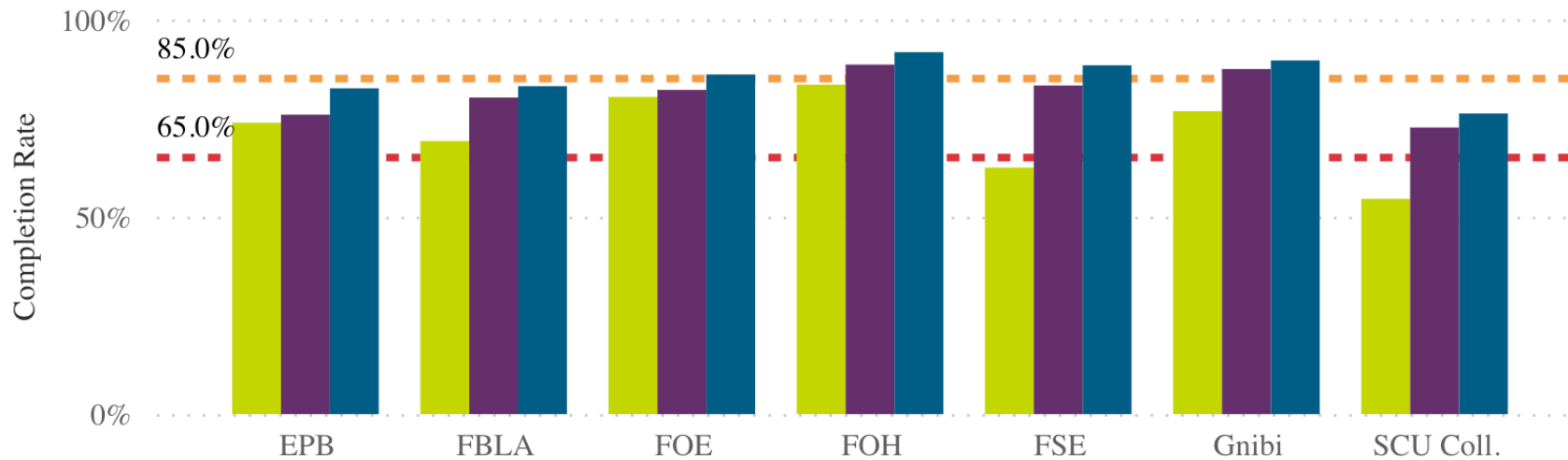
- increased from **84.3%** agreement in 2019 ($n = 2,444$) to **88.9%** agreement in 2021 ($n = 1,713$)
- a statistically significant improvement ($p < .001$)

An exploratory study of student satisfaction in the Southern Cross Model (Goode et al., 2023a)

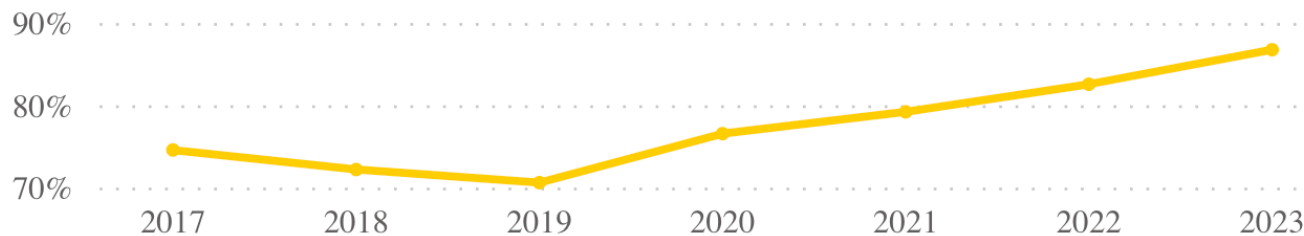
Transforming student outcomes

Unit Success Rate

Selected Period in 2019 2022 2023



Unit Success Rate Success Rate Sector Avg



Unit Success Mean

2019 70.6%
2022 82.6%
2023 86.8%

Includes:

- Units that transitioned to the SCM in 2021, 2022 or Summer Term/Term 1, 2023
- New and Redeveloped units
- Non-Award, Undergraduate and Postgraduate units
- Domestic and International students

Increases in 2022 and 2023 are statistically significant compared to 2019 at $p < .05$



Thank you

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Goode, E., Roche, T., Wilson, E., & McKenzie, J. W. (2023a). An exploratory study of student satisfaction in the Southern Cross Model. *Southern Cross University Scholarship of Learning and Teaching Paper No. 7*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4376615>

Goode, E., Roche, T., Wilson, E., & McKenzie, J. W. (2023b). Implications of immersive scheduling for student achievement and feedback and feedback. *Studies in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2184472>

Roche, T., Wilson, E., & Goode, E. (2022). Why the Southern Cross Model? How one university's curriculum was transformed. *Southern Cross University Scholarship of Learning and Teaching Paper No. 3*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4029237>