

# VU Block Model<sup>®</sup> 2.0

## Principles and Descriptors

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## Acknowledgement of Country



Victoria University acknowledges, recognises and respects the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung of the Kulin who are the traditional owners of University land in Victoria, the Gadigal and Guring-gai of the Eora Nation who are the traditional owners of University land in Sydney, and the Yulara/YUgarapul people and Turrbal people living in Meanjin (Brisbane).



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## Preamble

Victoria University (VU) is proud of its significant achievements resulting from its bold and comprehensive adoption of the **VU Block Model®**. VU has strategically differentiated itself in the sector through its distinctive pedagogy, with the VU Block Model as the central value proposition. This innovative model was introduced as part of the establishment of VU's **First Year College®** – an initiative designed to provide enhanced academic and personal support to learners transitioning into university. Building on the success of the Block Model within the First Year College, VU expanded its implementation across the majority of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, transforming the broader student learning experience. The Block Model provides high-quality teaching, learning, curriculum design, and student support that accommodates diversity and inclusiveness, as well as personalised engagement, success, and a sense of belonging. An increasing body of [research](#) continues to highlight the positive impact of this innovative pedagogy – particularly in improving student retention, satisfaction, and success, especially among equity cohorts.

Since the Block Model was first introduced in 2018, the broader tertiary education system has evolved significantly. Across Australia and globally, the sector has faced considerable challenges and rapid change – reshaping student expectations and the learning experience. Rising digital literacy, the emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI), a focus on graduate employment outcomes, and ongoing technological innovation are influencing not only pedagogy, but the broader operational environment. Both learners and staff now expect more connected, responsive, and digitally enabled learning and support.

In parallel, our regulators continue to innovate and collaborate across the sector. VU remains committed to meeting its responsibilities to both the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). These agencies play a vital role in protecting the interest of learners and upholding sector standards. Their guardrails are valued at VU as an assurance that our delivery meets – and can exceed – external requirements and the expectations that inform them.

In recognition of these shifts, a Strategic Review of the VU Block Model was commissioned in 2024 by Professor John Germov, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer. Building on the 2021 Interim Review, this work explored opportunities and challenges facing the VU Block Model in the changing educational landscape. The 2024 review confirmed that, to maintain VU's distinctive trajectory, realise the vision of OneVU, and be recognised as a global leader in Block Model delivery, VU should refresh its Block Model Principles – marking the next phase in its evolution: **Block 2.0**.

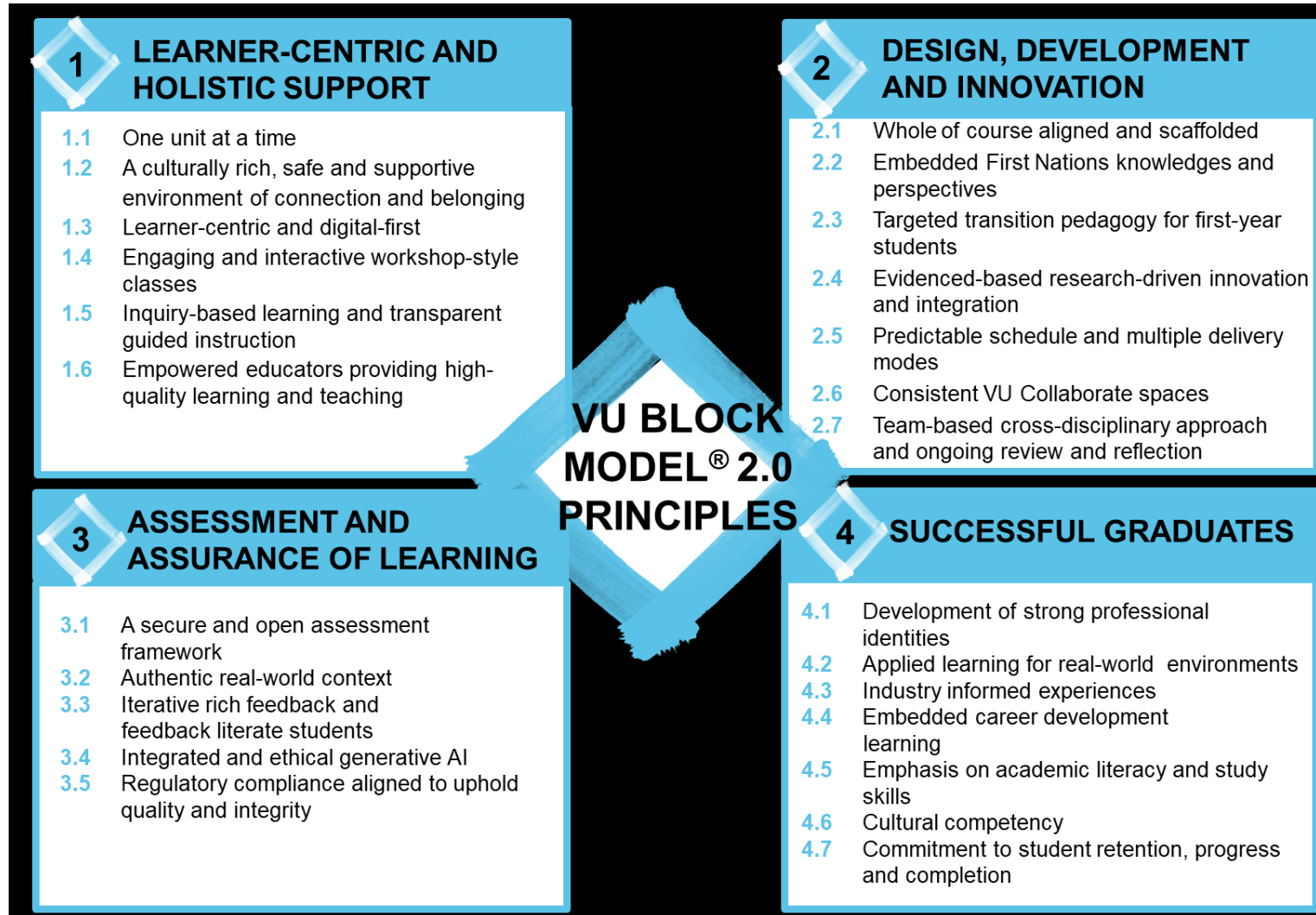
The VU Block Model is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Its design is flexible, recognising that different course types – across VU TAFE, VU Online, undergraduate and postgraduate offerings – require different delivery durations and formats. While these vary across Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels (see Appendix A), all formats at VU adhere to the broader VU Block Model Principles and are designed to deliver a comprehensive and immersive learning experience.

The **VU Block Model 2.0 Principles** serve as a guide with alignment to VU's [Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards Framework](#), including the [Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards Policy](#), the [Assessment for Learning Policy](#) suite, and the [Support for Students Policy](#).



## VU Block Model® 2.0 Principles: Infographic

Note: The design of this infographic is draft only. A student competition is scheduled to commence after Winter Block to design the infographic.





# VU Block Model® 2.0: Descriptors

## 1. LEARNER-CENTRIC AND HOLISTIC SUPPORT

### 1.1 One unit at a time

- ◆ Under the VU Block Model, undergraduate learners focus on one unit at a time, allowing them to balance study, work, and life effectively. This approach enables deep engagement with each subject, eliminating the complexities of managing multiple units and overlapping assessments.
- ◆ Block delivery for VU Online is also one unit at a time, normally delivered over seven weeks for postgraduate units and four weeks for undergraduate units.
- ◆ Exceptions apply for postgraduate learners, who may study two units at a time over an eight-week Block.
- ◆ Each unit is designed to be immersive and self-contained, following a structured narrative and timeline where coursework, assessment, and feedback are completed within the Block.

### 1.2 A culturally rich, safe and supportive environment of connection and belonging

- ◆ The VU Block Model is a learner-centric pedagogic approach that recognises the important role learner-to-learner and learner-to-educator relationships play in the creation of safe, welcoming and supportive study environments. Learners can express themselves freely, feel valued and connected, so that they can thrive in their study.
- ◆ Comprehensive wrap-around student support is available through dedicated resources and service units, including: counselling, mental health and student welfare services; disability and accessibility support; financial aid and scholarships; tailored learning support programs (via the VU Learning Hub and VU Library); the VU Careers Hub; mentorship programs; housing and accommodation guidance; Student Advocacy; the Safer Community Hub; the Integrity Office for complaint resolution and student misconduct advice; and Course and Unit Advisors. These central services help connect learners to the broader university community, fostering help-seeking and advocacy skills that remain valuable throughout the student lifecycle and beyond. Appendix B provides a high-level overview of VU's **Academic Support Model**.
- ◆ VU's [Indigenous Academic Unit – Moondani Balluk](#) also helps foster a culturally safe environment that welcomes, nurtures and recreates community, connection and belonging based on and in relationships to land, culture, law and Elders. Cultural safety is required for First Nations learners and First Nations educators to thrive and actively engage in the VU Block Model. Moondani Balluk means 'embrace people' in the language of the Wurundjeri people who first lived in the western region of Melbourne.
- ◆ To further enhance student belonging and promote peer interaction, VU offers a variety of programs and activities, such as tailored orientation programs, Thrive



(active living and wellness initiatives), Student Leadership and Ambassador programs, Student Unions and Associations, on-campus social sports, a range of clubs and other student groups, that foster engaging opportunities beyond the classroom.

### 1.3 Learner-centric and digital-first

- ◆ The VU Block Model seeks to prevent surface learning by developing a culture where learning, teaching and assessment are 'less transactional' and more engaging, relevant, and relationship rich. This approach aligns with **heutagogical principles**, which empower learners to make decisions, reflect, and take responsible for their learning, encouraging deeper engagement with the learning process.
- ◆ The VU Block Model embraces a learner-centric approach, acknowledging the diverse backgrounds, needs, and experiences of its learners. This model provides personalised and adaptable support to meet each individual's unique characteristics and requirements. VU is committed to equity, diversity and inclusivity, as outlined in its dedicated Cultural Inclusion and Racial Equality Plan. This plan aligns with the legislative requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005. VU also has Accessibility Liaison Officers who assist learners in accessing support services, resources, and necessary adjustments for their studies and assessment.
- ◆ VU is adopting a digital-first course design approach to support multi-channel delivery and ensure that both on-campus and online learners experience the same level of engagement and access to high-quality learning resources. This integration prepares learners for professional practice by mirroring real-world technological applications.

### 1.4 Engaging and interactive workshop-style classes

- ◆ Block-based approaches to teaching and learning work best when educators can build rapport with learners both as a group and as individuals. Classes will normally comprise up to 36 students, which allows for a diversity of thought and discussion, yet small enough that no learner remains unheard. Under such conditions, educators can get to know each learner in their class, and fellow learners are able to build learning communities and professional identities where they work with and support their peers in their learning.
- ◆ All VU Block Model classrooms, whether face-to-face or online, are places of interaction where learners and educators collaborate to share and critique ideas in the creation of knowledge.

### 1.5 Inquiry-based learning and transparent guided instruction

- ◆ Inquiry-based learning and transparent guided instruction supports learners to actively engage in their learning journey. Educators foster a culture where learners are encouraged to question, explore, and make connections between topics, promoting critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving.
- ◆ Learners are guided by clear instructions that help them navigate tasks and assessments, ensuring alignment with academic and graduate employment



outcomes. While providing this structure, learners are also encouraged to think independently, develop self-directed learning practices, and engage in collaborative and reflective inquiry. This model helps facilitate a deep, ethical, and lifelong learning experience.

## 1.6 Empowered educators providing high-quality learning and teaching

- ♦ To ensure a learner-centred and high-impact teaching environment, educators must have a strong understanding of the VU Block Model pedagogy, including its application across diverse learner cohorts and holistic learner support services. VU empowers educators through tailored, ongoing professional learning programs that promote reflective practice, pedagogical innovation, and engagement with the scholarship of learning and teaching. These programs are regularly updated to reflect educator feedback, emerging trends, and the evolving needs of learners, industry, and the professions.
- ♦ Educator input is formally integrated into Block Model enhancements through structured feedback mechanisms, such as academic leadership forums, annual course monitoring and comprehensive course review processes. These channels ensure that improvements are co-designed with those who deliver the curriculum.
- ♦ To support innovation and professional growth, dedicated time for development is built into academic work allocation. This ensures that innovation, curriculum refinement, and learner-focused teaching practices are sustained without detracting from core responsibilities. Through this approach, staff are supported to apply best practice, confidently adapt to changing educational landscapes, and co-create a transformative learning experience with their learners.

# 2. DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

## 2.1 Whole of course aligned and scaffolded

- ♦ The VU Block Model employs a 'backward design' approach to curriculum development, starting with the identification of desired learning outcomes and working backward to develop learning experiences that meet those outcomes. Grounded in principles of *constructive alignment*, this process places learner needs – including students with disability and neurodivergent learners – at its core, ensuring that course design is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to all learners.
- ♦ The design process ensures alignment with the University's core graduate capabilities, course learning outcomes, and the evolving needs of industry and professions.
- ♦ Course structures are scaffolded to build integrated knowledge and facilitate the development of higher-order skills – including clinical and professional competencies where relevant – across the learner lifecycle. A well-designed, organised, scaffolded and sequenced curriculum also plays a critical role in supporting mental wellbeing – helping to build confidence and promote a sense of stability and clarity in the learning journey.

- ◆ Unit learning outcomes are designed to progressively support and assure course learning outcomes at the appropriate AQF level. All units are coherently aligned with course goals, core graduate attributes, and any applicable industry and professional accreditation standards.
- ◆ Courses are designed to be flexible and inclusive, offering multiple entry and exit points, and allowing learners to navigate their learning journey in a way that supports their individual circumstances.

## 2.2 Embedded First Nations knowledges and perspectives

- ◆ First Nations knowledges and perspectives are embedded in learning and teaching to ensure First Nations learners can see themselves in the curriculum, and all learners can learn and understand First Nations historical and contemporary issues.
- ◆ Resources are available at Moondani Balluk for understanding truth-telling, First Nations history and sovereignty, and through creating collaborative curriculum and teaching teams with Moondani Balluk.

## 2.3 Targeted transition pedagogy for first-year students

- ◆ Transition pedagogy considerations are embedded in the design and development of every unit of study – supporting learners as they move from one phase of their learning journey to another, such as from high school to university, or from one level of study to the next. Attention is given to ensuring that learners have the necessary support, guidance, and resources to successfully progress through their academic experience. This can include strategies for helping learners adapt to new learning environments, manage academic challenges, and build the skills they need for success.
- ◆ Each course has an identified **Start Well unit**, which is the first unit taken by learners (refer Appendix C for further details). These units are intentionally ‘transition focused’, introduce learners to their discipline, cohort, academic literacy and academic integrity expectations, to life at university, and offer learners the opportunity to achieve and experience early success.

## 2.4 Evidenced-based research-driven innovation and integration

- ◆ VU fosters a culture of evidenced-based research-driven innovation that enhances the quality of education and contributes to the advancement of knowledge. This principle emphasises the integration of research into all aspects of the VU Block Model, ensuring that teaching, learning, and assessment are informed by the latest research findings and scholarship.
- ◆ The VU Block Model integrates and embeds research-led teaching and learning practices across all courses and units, ensuring that learners are exposed to cutting-edge knowledge and methodologies.

## 2.5 Predictable schedule and multiple delivery modes

- ◆ The VU Block Model recognises the competing priorities of study, work and life commitments faced by our learner cohorts and therefore offers various modes of delivery to enhance flexibility where possible, including:
  - In-person face-to-face delivery

- Online Real-time
  - Online Self-paced
  - Hybrid (online and in-person).
- ◆ Each VU Block Model unit is based on a predictable schedule of classes per week (with any required labs and practical sessions conducted on the same days as workshops). This regularity allows learners to balance study with their work commitments and lifestyles.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.6 Consistent VU Collaborate spaces

- ◆ VU's Learning Management System (VU Collaborate) spaces are based on Universal Design for Learning principles, ensuring support for multimodal learning, accessibility, and activity-based engagement. These spaces feature a strong narrative with clear explanations of the purpose and value of each learning activity, providing learners with a consistent, high-quality learning experience. Maintaining consistency ensures learners are comfortable navigating VU Collaborate within and across TAFE, Higher Education (HE), and VU Online. Global learning experience language is utilised to reduce unnecessary cognitive overload for learners.
- ◆ All unit materials, including assessments, rubrics, readings, and feedback, are provided digitally through VU Collaborate to support and enhance class discussions. Learning resources, including full access to library materials, are available online, eliminating the need for textbooks and ensuring free access to essential content. These resources are made available in VU Collaborate one week before the unit begins, allowing learners to be fully prepared from day one.
- ◆ Learning spaces are mobile responsive, allowing learners to learn anytime, anywhere, on any device.

## 2.7 Team-based cross-disciplinary approach and ongoing review and reflection

- ◆ Units and courses are designed and delivered by teams consisting of subject matter experts, academic staff from non-cognate discipline areas, student support and library staff, learning designers, industry experts, and 'students as staff'.
- ◆ Each unit is peer reviewed before being approved for its first delivery.
- ◆ Units are subject to regular review as per VU's unit review process after each delivery and any major changes to units are undertaken through a collaborative team-based approach.
- ◆ Units and courses undergo regular reviews through VU's Annual Course Monitoring, Comprehensive Course Review, and Scholarship of Learning and Teaching processes.
- ◆ External referencing is also used to support and demonstrate the achievement of academic standards, ensuring the quality of courses, units, teaching methods, assessment models, learner progress, student experience, and graduate outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> The One VU Timetable project is currently underway with key deliverables including: seamless integration of TAFE and HE timetables; and a predictable HE timetable to give students certainty and optimise available space and room allocations.

## 3. ASSESSMENT AND ASSURANCE OF LEARNING

### 3.1 A secure and open assessment framework

- ◆ The VU Block Model adopts secure assessment focused on assured assessments of learning that utilise a multi-layered approach to validate the scaffolding and attainment of core knowledge and skills, such as synchronous, in-person (physical or digital), oral and written or practical assessments (often referred to as **secure assessments**).
- ◆ The VU Block Model also includes open assessments, which are (usually) formative assessments that may draw upon human/generative AI collaboration through 'assessment as learning' practices, such as projects where learners use generative AI tools to produce and critically analyse artifacts and reflect and provide/receive feedback on their learning process. These tasks promote evaluative judgement by encouraging learners to reflect on quality, standards, and criteria in relation to their own work and that of others.

### 3.2 Authentic real-world context

- ◆ Assessments are designed to measure the mastery of unit learning outcomes, provide targeted feedback, and encourage self-directed learning. This approach promotes autonomy and relevance, empowering learners to apply knowledge in real-world contexts and fosters lifelong learning.
- ◆ Assessment tasks support the development of cognitive, discipline-specific and transferable skills at the appropriate AQF level, including, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and technology use.
- ◆ Tasks are designed to provide learners with opportunities to engage in workplace-relevant activities to enhance graduate employment readiness.
- ◆ A variety of assessment methods are employed to allow learners to demonstrate skill development and discipline-based understanding that meets professional accreditation standards where relevant.

### 3.3 Iterative rich feedback and feedback literate students

- ◆ Feedback is provided at multiple stages, allowing learners to reflect, revise, and improve their work, supporting continuous development through iterative adjustments. Learners receive formal, informal, and peer-to-peer feedback; learning to give and receive feedback constructively with clear guidance on how to succeed. Ongoing feedback ensures learners are aware of the work they need to undertake to succeed while training in feedback literacy helps them engage effectively with all feedback forms.
- ◆ Feedback aligns with assessment rubric criteria, ensuring clarity and relevance, and establishing a transparent link between assessment requirements and performance.
- ◆ Assessment items are promptly marked with constructive feedback, supported by consistent rubrics. Learners receive their results by the end of the Block. However, in cases where an extension has been granted, a Learning Access Plan is in place, an academic integrity matter arises, or other unforeseen circumstances occur, the results may be delayed.

### 3.4 Integrated and ethical generative AI

- ◆ Generative AI is integrated into assessment design and feedback where appropriate to improve efficiency, personalisation and quality.
- ◆ Ethical integration of AI is applied to enhance learning, teaching, assessment, and research, while addressing risks related to academic and research integrity. These practices are also designed to support assessment for inclusion, ensuring that technology-enhanced learning tools are accessible, ethical, and equitable.

### 3.5 Regulatory compliance aligned to uphold quality and integrity

- ◆ VU is committed to embedding compliance with all relevant regulatory standards into assessment practices, course design, and delivery methods to uphold quality, accountability, academic integrity, and professional accreditation standards where relevant.
- ◆ VU fosters innovative approaches to assessment that enhances learning outcomes – while remaining aligned and compliant with regulatory standards and academic quality expectations. These approaches include assessment for inclusion and the development of learners' evaluative judgement as core elements of quality, integrity, and lifelong learning readiness.

## 4. SUCCESSFUL GRADUATES

### 4.1 Development of strong professional identities

- ◆ Through targeted experiences, learners are guided to understand industry expectations and develop competencies that align with professional standards, ensuring they are workplace-ready upon graduation.
- ◆ Learners are supported in the development of strong professional identities, equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary for successful graduate employment.

### 4.2 Applied learning for real-world environments

- ◆ The VU Block Model integrates disciplinary knowledge with authentic learning activities, allowing learners to practice and demonstrate industry-relevant skills.
- ◆ VU's teaching approach emphasises real-world, practice-based learning, enabling learners to develop and demonstrate professional skills in both on-campus and online environments.

### 4.3 Industry informed experiences

- ◆ Learners have access to internships, placements, and work-based projects, which support the achievement of course learning outcomes and graduate capabilities. Integrated industry experiences ensure that learning is applied, relevant, and aligned with employer expectations and professional practice. Courses combine theoretical knowledge with practical application through real-world scenarios, case studies, and industry-informed assessments, helping learners

refine their professional competencies.

#### 4.4 Embedded career development learning

- ◆ Industry working groups are engaged during course design and review to help identify emerging skill and industry learning requirements, ensuring course currency and the career-readiness of VU graduates.
- ◆ Career development learning is embedded into units across all courses to develop lifelong career management skills, a sense of professional identity, and provide access to work-integrated learning (WIL) experiences.

#### 4.5 Emphasis on academic and study skills

- ◆ Prioritising the development of essential academic and study skills ensures that all learners are equipped with the tools required to succeed in a tertiary education environment, recognising the diverse ways learning occurs, including by those who are neurodivergent.
- ◆ Skills such as time management, critical thinking, problem-solving, note-taking, summarising, independent research, academic referencing, report writing, and communication are introduced and reinforced throughout each course. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, support is designed to be flexible and responsive to individual learning needs, aligning with universal design principles.
- ◆ Specific strategies and resources are incorporated to support neurodivergent learners and learners with disability, ensuring they can access, develop, and apply study skills in ways that are meaningful and effective for them. This may include tailored learning supports, alternative techniques, assistive technologies, and staff training in inclusive pedagogies. This approach aims to foster deep engagement with academic content while also building lifelong learning and professional capabilities in an inclusive, supportive environment.

#### 4.6 Cultural competency

- ◆ Moondani Balluk encourages sharing of First Nations knowledge and translating and embedding First Nations practices into VU's research, curricula, and First Nations pedagogy so that all learners and non-First Nations academic staff can become competent in the delivery of First Nations curricula content.
- ◆ With a diverse student cohort at VU, interactive and engaging activities foster relationship-building and enhance understanding of various cultures and perspectives, preparing graduates to thrive in global and multicultural environments.

#### 4.7 Commitment to student retention, progress and completion

- ◆ VU promotes learner success through personalised services, proactive engagement, and a strong academic foundation. This includes:
  - Early identification of at-risk learners
  - Tailored interventions
  - Ongoing progress monitoring and reporting of learner retention to support timely completion.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: TAFE and delivery durations across AQF levels

The VU Block Model is not a one-size-fits-all model. Its design is flexible to accommodate different Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels, disciplinary requirements, and teaching contexts. While the duration of a Block may vary, all delivery formats remain aligned to the core VU Block Model principles – ensuring a comprehensive, holistically supported and immersive learning experience for all learners.

**General Guideline:** Units at AQF Levels 6 to 7 are typically delivered in four week Blocks, while units at Levels 8 to 9 may run for either four or eight weeks, depending on their complexity and learning outcomes.

**VU Online:** The duration of Block delivery is normally seven weeks for postgraduate units and four weeks for undergraduate units.

**TAFE:** VU's TAFE courses incorporate the benefits of Block-style delivery by focusing on immersive learning experiences, one unit at a time, work-shop style classes, strong relationships between learners and educators, with cohort-specific adaptations. Note that TAFE does not normally use credit points or four week Blocks due to different regulatory compliance requirements. Some Higher Education Diploma courses and Foundation courses are offered by TAFE in Block mode.

**Practical Placements:** Placements can span multiple Blocks to accommodate practical learning requirements.

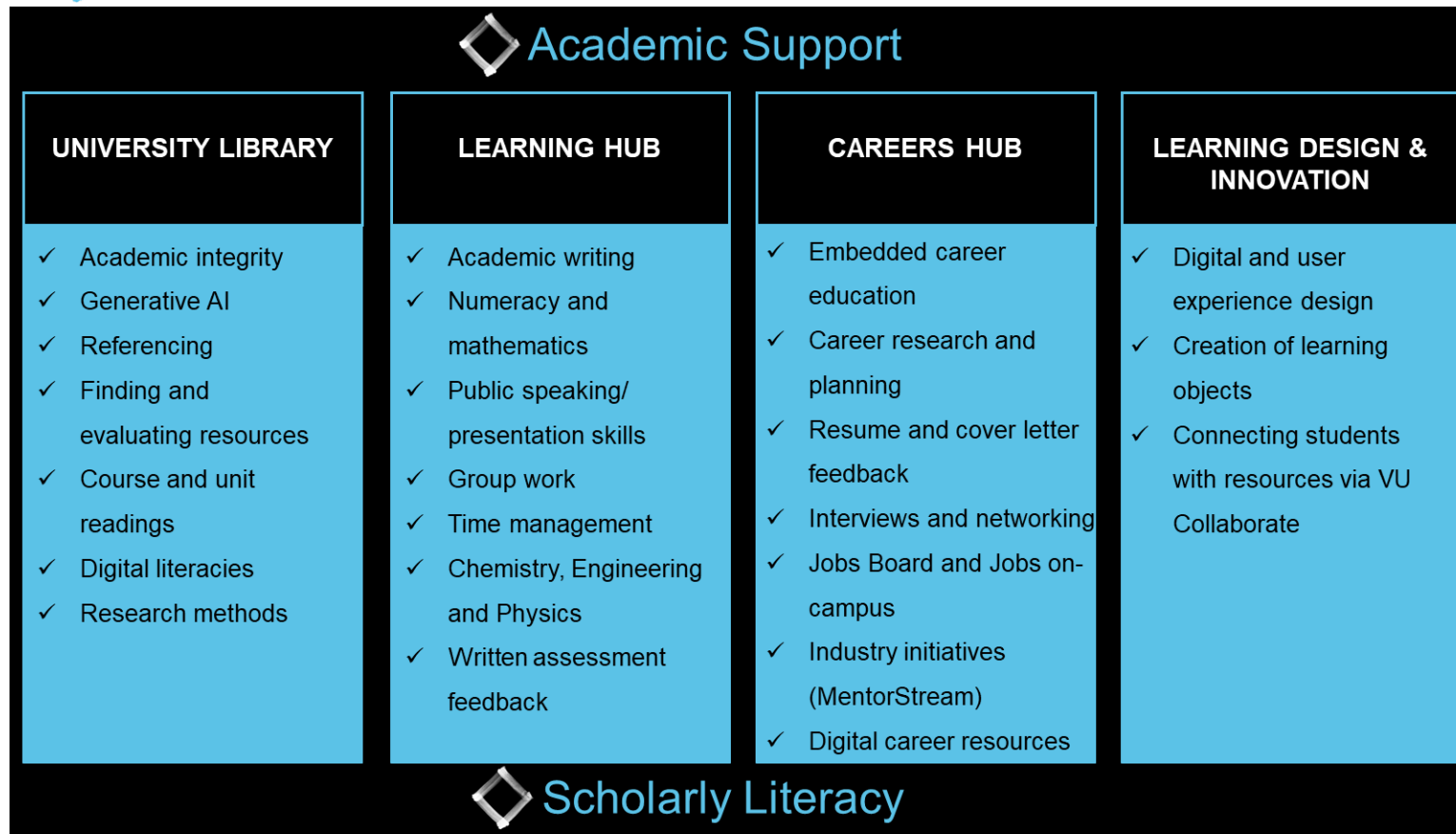
**Work-Integrated Learning (WIL):** This is generally completed in class time, but may also take place outside of class time depending on the nature of the WIL experience.

**Note:** Appendix A aligns with the [Courses Lifecycle: Award Course Design \(HE\) Procedure](#).



## Appendix B: VU Academic Support Model

# VU ACADEMIC SUPPORT MODEL



## Appendix C: Start Well Units

# VU START WELL UNITS



### Academic Integrity Modules

- Academic writing guidance
- Plagiarism awareness
- Ethical use of artificial intelligence
- Mandatory completion ensuring student understanding of academic integrity



### New Learning Hub Modules

- Academic writing skills to enhance writing fluency and confidence
- Other academic skills such as numeracy, presentation skills workshops
- Tackling common challenges faced by First-Year Students
- Studiosity program for 24-hour support
- Drop in sessions
- 1:1 appointments



### Enhanced Learning Environment

- Updated look and feel revamp of all Start Well Units
- Content displayed clearly and consistently to students
- Ensuring of all essential information in Start Well Units
- Student-centred staff



### Upgraded Student Induction Module

- Academic expectations
- Learning management system familiarisation
- Build connections in the university community
- Student support services



### New Library Content

- Research skills
- Referencing skills
- Academic writing
- Use of zotero referencing program
- Effective research techniques, referencing and citation styles

## Succeed and Excel

- ✓ Academic readiness
- ✓ Skill building
- ✓ Student capacity building
- ✓ Resource awareness
- ✓ Student engagement
- ✓ Success

The "Start Well" (first block units) initiative integrates these components into the first-year experience, creating a structured and supportive introduction to academic life. By focusing on essential skills, ethical practices, and resource utilisation, the program aims to improve academic performance, foster student engagement, and support retention. This holistic approach reflects Victoria University's commitment to creating a supportive and empowering learning environment for first-year students, providing a strong foundation for their academic success and personal growth.

## Status and Version

<b>Status:</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date:</b>	4 June 2025 (Academic Board approval)
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<b>Accountable Officer:</b>	Professor John Germov, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer
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