Education Horizon
Research grant scheme

Approved proposals 2016

Contents

2016 funding round

Grant category: **Early childhood education and care**

Lead Researcher	Project Title	Project Summary	Sponsor Organisation	Funding Awarded
Dr Areana Eivers	The impacts of an Indigenous Summer School Program on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's transition to school	Early education programs support positive transition to school and ongoing educational attainment by promoting social-emotional development, adaptation to group contexts, and familiarity with school routines. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have lower participation in early childhood education than non-Indigenous children and are therefore at higher risk of poorer school transition. This study assesses the impact of an intense summer school model on transition to school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who had not previously attended an early education program.	Queensland University of Technology	$40,552
Professor Alison Elliott	Supporting rural and remote early childhood educators in their first two years of teaching	A better understanding of what works in attracting, supporting and retaining early childhood teachers in early years contexts has the potential to improve quality and continuity of learning experiences for children and communities in the critical early years of a child's education. This may also inform providers of Initial Teacher Education courses about ways to better target initial teacher education to meet the specific needs of students who plan to teach in rural and remote locations. Specifically, this study will focus on: (1) identifying factors that influence early childhood teachers' development of positive attitudes toward teaching and their school/early years settings and community; (2) factors that most affect students' views about teaching as a career and decisions about career futures, including whether to leave teaching within two to three years; and (3) ways in which beginning teachers in remote and rural Queensland can best be supported to transition to an early childhood teaching context.	Central Queensland University	$53,286

Dr Amanda McFadden	Developing a pedagogical model for information literacy in the early years: a transdisciplinary approach	The ability to use online information effectively is a critical skill for the 21st century and one that needs to be supported in the early years. In particular, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have limited information literacy skills. Low information literacy may manifest in poorer educational outcomes, and may affect broader life trajectories. This research aims to develop new understandings about pedagogies for information literacy skills, considering the perspectives of a transdisciplinary team, including library personnel, teachers, educators, and principals.	Queensland University of Technology	$20,854
Associate Professor Karen Martin	Looking for the X factor: contextualised learning and young Indigenous Australian Children	This research aims to understand how current ideas and practices regarding curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are contextualised by teachers and made culturally relevant for young Indigenous learners in childcare, kindergartens and preparatory programs. Specifically, it aims to identify how this contextualisation can contribute to improving attendance, participation and learning outcomes of Indigenous children. The research aims to provide Queensland teachers of young Indigenous children with information about implementing contextualised and culturally relevant pedagogy and assessment that will enable more effective monitoring of student learning and measuring of student learning outcomes.	Griffith University	$72,595
Professor Karen Thorpe	Understanding educational outcomes of Queensland's investment in early education programs	Since 2007, Queensland has introduced major reforms in early education. This research will evaluate the impact of: (a) the quality of preschool programs; and (b) introduction of the Prep year in 2007. The impact of these changes will be evaluated via evidence of performance in NAPLAN results. The research will also examine the impact of Prep on student behaviour and discipline and seek to identify whether the impact of reforms apply equally to low income and Indigenous students.	Queensland University of Technology	$100,000

Grant category: **Schooling**

Lead Researcher	Project Title	Project Summary	Sponsor Organisation	Funding Awarded
Dr Wendy Fasso	A maker approach using craft and wearables to engage girls in digital technologies and coding	Participants in 'makerspaces' build material objects, create, solve problems, collaborate and learn. This approach immerses learners in activities that interest them, and as a result, removes traditional barriers to participation. Makerspaces are identified in recent research as being of importance in K–12 education. This research will consider the engagement of girls in their first years of secondary schooling through a short program of creative maker activities. It will also identify any initiation of a deeper interest in STEM-related learning pathways. The research will determine whether girls exposed to early creative success in a non-traditional field are encouraged to make non-stereotypical career decisions.	Central Queensland University	$17,324
Associate Professor Linda Graham	Empowering learners: using student voice, videorecorded classroom interactions and teacher feedback to develop positive learning environments in high-need Queensland secondary schools	A significant proportion of young people still do not complete Year 12, and a high proportion of these will not be in further education, training or employment at age 24. Common to this group is a history of negative educational experiences, including conflictual teacher-student relationships and disrupted learning due to chronic absenteeism coupled with disciplinary absences. This research will use student voice, video observation of classroom interactions and teacher feedback/professional development to promote positive learning environments in schools serving high numbers of learners with challenging behaviours.	Queensland University of Technology	$92,831
Associate Professor Andrew Hickey	Informal learning in the secondary school: behaviour remediation programs and the informal learning environment as a space for re-engagement	This research builds on an earlier pilot program, the Bike Build Project, that sought to explore informal learning spaces within the school as sites for re-engagement. The program involved re-engaging groups of middle-year students at risk of expulsion in this peer-mediated, skills-building program. The program used the restoration of old bicycles and motorcycles as means for alternative learning. The current research project will examine how formal curriculum might be integrated into the Bike Build Program. In particular, the study will explore how aspects of the science and mathematics curriculum might feasibly be incorporated into the informal learning environment, while also exploring the nature of peer learning and collaboration operating in this open learning space.	University of Southern Queensland	$29,765

Professor Martin Mills	Engaging schools: What works to keep young people engaged in meaningful learning in low SES schools	Mainstream schools in Queensland are responding to young people who are in danger of disengaging. However, schools' initiatives, philosophies and strategies in this regard have not been researched, recorded and disseminated. There is also limited research on whether these initiatives/strategies may be adapted and adopted system-wide. This research seeks to determine: (1) strategies that work at a school level to keep students who are in danger of disengaging from education in school, and enthused about learning; and (2) how such strategies can be developed and utilised across the system. This research will also give consideration to issues beyond retention to include the concept of meaningful learning, and what constitutes schooling achievement for students who would have otherwise disengaged and/or dropped out of education.	The University of Queensland	$99,946
Associate Professor Clarence Ng	Improving disadvantaged students' reading engagement and reading outcomes using student voice driven and masteryfocused reading models	This research addresses the persistent national achievement gap in literacy between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. The aim is to develop mastery-focused classroom practices and strategies for promoting engaged reading and improving reading outcomes in schools serving disadvantaged students. The research will develop evidence-based practices to improve reading performance, including: responsive and context-relevant pedagogic strategies and practices for promoting mastery-focused reading; enhancing interest and engagement in reading; and improving reading outcomes.	Australian Catholic University	$63,536
Dr Kate Williams	From developmentally vulnerable in prep to performing strongly in Year 3: Child, family, and schooling factors that support 'closing the gap'	Achievement gaps associated with sociodemographic gradients appear to be widening. Little is known at a population level about which vulnerable students are able to 'close the gap' across the school years and which factors contribute to better than expected outcomes. This research explores the strength of associations between children's early learning competencies at school entry and achievement in Year 3. It focuses on factors that contribute to academic resilience for children who begin school with identified developmental vulnerabilities. The influences of child and family characteristics and schooling experiences on children's achievement trajectories will be examined. Research findings will inform education policy and practice regarding factors that support positive learning trajectories for children who are at risk of poor achievement.	Queensland University of Technology	$29,141

Dr Jill Willis	Strengthening senior curriculum and assessment pedagogies	Queensland's new senior curriculum, standards and assessment processes will commence in 2018. Internationally, there are calls to enhance teacher assessment literacy to position systems to enhance the outcomes of such changes. This research focuses on a case study of the subject with greatest enrolment, senior English. It will investigate how teachers and their students negotiate and resolve issues of validity, reliability and equity as they make curriculum, assessment and pedagogic decisions. It will develop resources and an open-access, online professional development module to provide critically reflective assessment literacy at scale, as well as a model for policy and future research.	Queensland University of Technology	$22,575
Dr Linda-Dianne Willis	Principal leadership for parent-school-community engagement in disadvantaged schools	There are strong links between parent-school-community engagement and children's learning academically, socially and emotionally. While educationally disadvantaged schools tend to have lower parent-school-community engagement levels, Queensland shows high levels of parent-school community engagement for some of these schools. This research seeks to investigate how principal leadership facilitates engagement in four Queensland primary schools. The research will explore the principal leadership practices that enable these schools to engage parent/community members. These case studies will: (1) provide examples of good practice; (2) support future research; and (3) aid in the development of a measure of parent-school-community engagement.	The University of Queensland	$96,225

| Professor Claire Wyatt-Smith | Research partnerships and improvement science: using data to inform the teaching of writing and assessment | This research will address the significant knowledge gap in research, practice and policy about necessary interventions to reverse the increasing numbers of students falling below the national minimum standard in writing (Years 3–9) in each Australian state and territory. Addressing this decline is critical to short circuit the potential impact of poor writing skills on students' schooling success and future workforce opportunities. The research will: (1) identify schools with longitudinal upward trends in writing; (2) generate a database on classroom teaching and assessment of writing using a new purpose-built Australian Writing Survey; (3) strengthen teachers' knowledge of language features and structures through the use of a meta-language toolkit; (4) improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of year level writing expectations and achievement standards to improve writing assessment; (5) generate exemplars of quality writing for further classroom use; and (6) trial a virtual research environment to supplement site visits and other online support. | Australian Catholic University | $70,000 |

Grant category: **Vocational education and training**

Lead Researcher	Project Title	Project Summary	Sponsor Organisation	Funding Awarded
Associate Professor Leanne Hides	The RAW Wellbeing Program for adolescents at risk of disengaging from education and training	Many young people lack the skills needed to successfully navigate the challenges of adolescence, and are at risk of disengaging from education and training. Once disengaged, they are at increased risk of mental health issues and substance use, as well as poor social and economic outcomes. This research will determine the effectiveness of the unique RAW Wellbeing Program for improving the mental health, wellbeing, resilience and learning outcomes of young people attending three vocational schools.	Queensland University of Technology	$96,339
Ms Anne Catherine Smith	Sunkirsten Town: Learning experiences of external-mode rural and regional learners in a virtual campus	TAFE Queensland has more than 125,000 students in 46 locations state-wide. Learners in regional/rural areas should not be excluded from innovative learning technologies and pedagogies, nor should their learning experiences be inferior to that of face-to-face students. However, external-mode student completion rates within the TAFE Queensland South West Community Services program are lower than the average for face-to-face TAFE courses. This research addresses student isolation and aims to improve quality experiences, motivation, retention and completion for students in rural/regional locations. It proposes to conduct a pilot study of a virtual campus developed for teaching and training purposes: Sunkirsten Town. The study will engage external-mode students in regional and rural locations, including Indigenous learners and those from low socio-economic backgrounds. It will assess practical use, and impact on student learning, experience and satisfaction of the virtual learning environment. The researchers will also observe the impact of virtual worlds on the development of digital and enterprise skills.	TAFE Queensland	$35,672

Grant category: **Open**

Lead Researcher	Project Title	Project Summary	Sponsor Organisation	Funding Awarded
Professor Paula Brough	"Who wants to be a teacher?" Supporting the transition, wellbeing, and retention of new teachers	This research will track the real-time experiences of new teachers, with a specific focus on the determinants of their psychological health. It expands on pilot work which demonstrated that approximately 55% of teachers reported being simultaneously highly engaged and under-pressure, resulting in adverse health and performance outcomes. This research will assess how wellbeing can be maintained in the first working year within a sample of teachers. It has three key aims: (1) monitor the real-time experiences of a targeted sample of new teachers and their mentors; (2) identify the best methods by which these new teachers can be supported, with a focus on maintenance of their psychological health; and (3) improve management of occupational stress amongst high-risk employees to facilitate successful retention.	Griffith University	$77,552

Further information

For more information, please refer to the Queensland Department of Education's *Education Horizon grant scheme* webpage: https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/reporting-data-research/research/research-funding/education-horizon

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