

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS:

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

10 am – 12 pm Thursday 17th September 2026

- **Description:** This university-wide event brings together university leaders, researchers, educators, academic and professional staff, and student support practitioners to explore what the research tells us—and how this knowledge is being translated into practice of supporting international students for success across Flinders University. Featuring an inspiring keynote speaker – Professor Michelle Picard, Pro Vice Chancellor of Teaching and Learning Innovation, lightning talks showcasing innovative practices from across Colleges and Flinders University Academy, and insights from our 2026 Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) winners, the event will highlight evidence-informed approaches that are making a difference to international students' academic success, belonging, wellbeing and employability. Join us to share research, celebrate innovative practice, hear diverse perspectives, exchange ideas and discover practical strategies for creating a more inclusive and supportive university environment where international students can belong, succeed and thrive. See the Program Details below for more information.
- **Organizers:** Community of Practice (CoP) on International Student Support
(Associate Professor Mai Ngo as CoP Lead and presenters from different Colleges and Flinders University Academy. This event is supported by Flinders Teaching and Learning Academy
- **Time:** @ 10 - 12 pm Thursday 17th September 2026
- **Presenters:** Professor Michele Picard (Keynote), Ass Prof. Mai Ngo (CoP Lead), Ass Prof. Jeffrey Gil from HSC, Dr. Saralouise White (Academic Director), Dr. Gilder Davilla Alvarez, Dr. Anne Bruehler and Taryn from FUA, and two 2026 AAUT Award Winners (Ass Prof. Mai Ngo and Dr. Helen Harrison)
- **Location:** online via Teams
- **Program Structure:** Welcome & Opening → Keynote → Research (What does the research tell us about international student support for success?) → Practice (What are universities currently doing)? → Closing
- **Registration:** This event is open for all Flinders University's staff to register to attend via iEnrol: <https://ienrol.flinders.edu.au/index.php/course/ISSCOP>

• PROGRAM DETAILS

Time	Sessions	Format & Title	Presenter
10.00 – 10.05 am	Welcome & Provocation	<i>Acknowledge of Country & Opening</i>	Ass. Prof. Mai Ngo, Lead of International Student Support CoP
10.05 – 10.25 am	A Keynote Speech	“ <i>Rethinking How Universities Enable International Student Success</i> ”	Prof. Michelle Picard, Pro Vice Chancellor Teaching and Learning Innovation
10.25 – 10.45 am	Supporting International Students for Success: <i>Research</i>	“ <i>Supporting International Students for Success: What Does the Research Tell Us?</i> ”	Ass. Prof. Mai Ngo, Lead of International Student Support CoP
10.45 – 11.30 am	Supporting International Students: <i>Practice</i>	10.45 – 11.15 am Lightning Talk from Flinders University Academy (FUA) (25 mins presenting + 5 mins Q & A) “<i>The Flinders University Academy: Pathways to Success</i>”	FUA Team: • Dr. Sarahlouise White, the Academic Director of the Academy • Dr. Gilder Davila, Director of Studies for the ELICOS program • Taryn Quensier, Student Services Manager for Flinders University Academy, • Anne Bruehler, the Lead Teacher of the International Foundation Studies Program at FUA

Time	Sessions	Format & Title	Presenter
		11.15 0 11.30 am: Lightning talk from College of HSC (10 mins + 5 mins Q & A): <i>“Tips for Supporting International Students Through Class Activities and Topic Materials”</i>	Ass Prof. Jeffrey Gil, TESOL Postgraduate Program Course Coordinator
11.30 – 11.50 am	Engaging international students for success: Exemplar Practice	A Roundtable <i>"What can we learn from award-winning teaching practice that could improve the experience and success of international students?"</i>	2026 AAUT Winners: Dr. Helen Harrison (College of MPH) & Ass Prof. Mai Ngo (College of HSC)
11.59 – 12.00 pm	Closing	<i>Reflections on Key takeaways, next steps and closing</i>	Ass. Prof. Mai Ngo Lead of International Student Support CoP

Keynote Speaker – Prof. Michelle Picard, Pro Vice Chancellor of Learning and Teaching

- Bio:** Michelle Picard currently serves as Pro-Vice Chancellor Learning and Teaching Innovation at Flinders University. Michelle Picard has been working in the fields of Higher Education and Applied Linguistics since 1989. She has taught at every level from Primary and Adult Basic Education and Training to Researcher Education programs to PhD and post-doctoral fellows. Her university work has spanned enabling/Foundation programs, ELICOS, academic language and learning and lecturing and supervising within Schools of Education, Arts and Social Sciences. Michelle has lived and worked in Australia, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates,

and The Sultanate of Oman and regularly taught programs in Singapore. Her fields of expertise include all levels of academic literacy development including academic integrity, TESOL, higher education, online and blended learning and English for Academic Purposes and supervises in the fields of Education, Applied Linguistics and Media. Michelle has held a number of leadership positions prior to joining Flinders including Associate Dean of the Faculty of the Professions and Director, Researcher Education at the University of Adelaide, Director of Studies at two ELICOS centres and numerous coordinator positions. She served as Deputy Director within the English Language and Foundation Studies Centre at the University of Newcastle from July 2016 to July 2019. She then worked as Dean of Teaching and Learning in the College/Faculty of Arts, Business, Law and Social Sciences at Murdoch University from July 2019 to October 2022 as well as Acting Executive Dean from March to October 2022.

- **Keynote Speech's Title:** Rethinking how universities enable international student success
- **Abstract:** *The literature on international student success suggests that universities best support this cohort by providing comprehensive services (Bi, 2025; Tajvar et al., 2024), fostering inclusive and culturally responsive environments (Qamar, 2026), encouraging student agency, and facilitating integration through institutional and policy measures (Penman et al., 2021; Sakiz & Jencius, 2024). However, as Myers and Picard (2008) argue, a further step is needed to avoid unnecessarily stigmatising international students and to support their success: institutions should merge what Boughey (2007) identifies as the “academic development (AD)” and “higher education development (HED)” models of student support, while also incorporating institutional adaptation (Zepke & Leach, 2005). This integrated approach combines the AD model’s emphasis on explicit instruction with the HED model’s focus on institutional adaptation, providing the pedagogical basis for internationalisation as organisational culture change through transformed academic practice and authentic cross-cultural understanding and engagement among student and staff communities (Meyer & Picard, 2007). This integrated model is unpacked, and practical examples of its implementation are provided as part of the keynote.*

Presenter: Associate Professor Mai Ngo

- **Bio:** Dr. Mai Ngo is Associate Professor in TESOL and Applied Linguistics at Flinders University in South Australia. Mai is TESOL Discipline Lead and is leading Flinders University's Community of Practice (CoP) for International Student Support. Mai was an international student from Vietnam, graduated with *Master of TESOL* from University of Sydney in 2000, *Master of Business Administration (MBA)* from Latrobe University in 2007, and *Doctor of Philosophy in Education* from the University of New South Wales in 2014. At Flinders University, Dr Mai received several Teaching Excellence Awards. She receives the College's Teaching Excellence Awards in 2021, and the Vice Chancellor's Teaching Excellence Award in December 2022. Mai has recently received the national Australian Award of University Teaching (AAUT) Citation Award in February 2026; her Citation was "*For transforming students' learning and employability success through inclusive and responsive approaches*"
- **Presentation Title:** *Supporting International Students for Success: What Does the Research Tell Us?*
- **Abstract:** *International students make significant cultural, academic and economic contributions to universities, yet their success is shaped by a complex interplay of academic, social, linguistic, cultural and institutional factors. Despite growing investment in support services and initiatives, many students struggle to recognise, access and benefit from available resources, and continue to experience challenges in navigating university systems, developing belonging, building meaningful relationships, and achieving their academic and career aspirations. Drawing on recent research on international student success, this presentation explores a fundamental question: What conditions enable international students not only to succeed, but to thrive? It examines student success as an outcome of the dynamic relationship between students and their university environment, shifting the focus from "What support do international students need?" to "How can universities create conditions in which students can recognise, access and benefit from the support, learning opportunities and relationships available to them?" The presentation brings together interconnected dimensions of international student success, including inclusive teaching, peer and staff relationships, belonging, support literacy, wellbeing and employability. It highlights how these dimensions interact to shape students' engagement and experiences across the university journey. The presentation concludes by advocating a shift from fragmented support initiatives towards a more integrated, inclusive and student-centred approach, positioning international student*

success as a shared responsibility and calling for universities to create environments in which all international students have the opportunity to thrive.

Presenters: Taryn Quensier, Dr. Anne Bruehler, Dr. Gilder Davila, Dr. Saralouise White

- **Flinders University Academy (FUA) staff Bios**

Taryn Quensier (*or Mrs Q to the students*) is the Student Services Manager for Flinders University Academy, overseeing student support, enrolments, compliance and student wellbeing. With more than 16 years of leadership experience in the South Australian public education sector, she has supported students from a broad range of cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. Taryn is passionate about creating welcoming, inclusive and student-centred environments where every student feels supported to succeed and is committed to enhance the overall student experience.

Dr Anne Bruehler is the Lead Teacher of the International Foundation Studies Program at Flinders University Academy and has graduate degrees in Applied Linguistics and Speech Language Pathology. She has over twenty years of teaching experience in higher education, including teaching English learners and training undergraduate pre-service teachers and graduate in-service teachers. Anne has extensive experience in course development, curriculum design, and various approaches to assessment. Her research focuses on language pedagogy and the role of language in identity construction.

Dr Gilder Davila is a higher-education practitioner and researcher specialising in English language education and international programs. He has worked in ELICOS and university contexts across teaching, curriculum design, materials development, and program leadership. His work and research focus on integrating content and language learning through approaches such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), with a strong commitment to student-centred pedagogy and practical classroom application. Gilder is the Academy's Director of Studies for the ELICOS program.

Dr Sarahlouise White is a passionate educator with a background in neuroscience. She has over twenty years of experience in the design of learning and teaching and led the development of the Academy programs. Sarahlouise has extensive experience designing contemporary curriculum across a variety of readiness to learn. Prior to becoming the Academic Director of the Academy, Sarahlouise taught across Flinders University undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

- **Presentation Title:** *The Flinders University Academy: Pathways to Success*
- **Abstract:** *In this presentation, we will share a little about the Flinders University Academy (FUA) and how we support international students: both directly and*

indirectly through supporting teachers. More specifically, Taryn will provide an overview of The Academy Programs including the entry points to the University and the hyper-care support offered to students by the Student Services team. Anne will describe the structure of the international Foundation Studies Program (FSPI), along with how the curriculum is an avenue for supporting and developing students' English language and academic learning skills. Gilder and Sarahlouise will introduce how the Academy organises and promotes opportunities for formal and informal professional development across all programs.

Presenter: Associate Professor Jeffrey Gil

- **Bio:** Dr. Jeffrey Gil is an Associate Professor of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in the College of Human Sciences and Culture. He has also taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Applied Linguistics at universities in China. Jeffrey has published widely on applied linguistics topics, including English as a global language, English language education in China and the global use and status of Chinese. He is the author of *Soft power and the worldwide promotion of Chinese language learning: The Confucius Institute project* and *The rise of Chinese as a global language: Prospects and obstacles*, and co-editor of *Exploring language in global contexts*.
- **Lightning Talk Title:** Tips for Supporting International Students Through Class Activities and Topic Materials
- **Abstract:** *In this talk I present four tips for supporting international students through class activities and topic materials, along with examples from my teaching: (1) Use class/online activities which give international students the opportunity to discuss their own experiences and their own countries; (2) Use class/online activities which give international students the opportunity to apply topic content and concepts to their own countries; (3) Use topic materials with examples from a diverse range of countries, especially students' countries where possible; and (4) Use readings and other course materials written/produced by authors from international*

backgrounds. These tips can be implemented quickly and easily as part of our everyday teaching preparation and practice.

Roundtable Presenters: 2026 AAUT Winners: Dr. Helen Harrison, and Ass Prof. Mai Ngo

- **Roundtable Title:** *"What can we learn from award-winning teaching practice that could improve the experience and success of international students?"*
- **Bio - Dr. Helen Harrison** is a Senior Lecturer specialising in Human Physiology in the College of Medicine and Public Health at Flinders University. She is Course Coordinator for the Medical Science programs and coordinates large physiology topics that support more than 750 students across a range of first- and second-year university programs. Helen is also Associate Dean (Student Success and Engagement) in the College of Medicine and Public Health and chairs the Flinders University Student Success Working Group, where she collaborates with staff across the institution to develop strategic initiatives that support student retention and success. Helen has presented at local and international conferences on student-centred curricula, enhancing the student experience, and fostering self-regulated learning. Her leadership and excellence in teaching have been recognised through a Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (UK, 2024), as well as several teaching awards, including an Australian Award for University Teaching Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning in 2025, the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching (Flinders University, 2024), and the Student-Led Teaching Award University Ducks in Teaching (FUSA, 2024).
- **Bio: Dr. Mai Ngo** is Associate Professor in TESOL and Applied Linguistics at Flinders University in South Australia. Mai is TESOL Discipline Lead and is leading Flinders University's Community of Practice (CoP) for International Student Support. Mai was an international student from Vietnam, graduated with *Master of TESOL* from University of Sydney in 2000, *Master of Business Administration (MBA)* from Latrobe University in 2007, and *Doctor of Philosophy in Education* from the University of New South Wales in 2014. At Flinders University, Dr Mai received several Teaching Excellence Awards. She receives the College's Teaching Excellence Awards in 2021, and the Vice Chancellor's Teaching Excellence Award in December 2022. Mai has recently received the national Australian Award of University Teaching (AAUT) Citation Award in February 2026; her Citation was *"For transforming students' learning and employability success through inclusive and responsive approaches.*