Supporting First Nations students’ career development: Lessons from Canada
Farhana Laffernis, University of New South Wales

As Indigenous university enrolments increase, a growing body of literature suggests that students from equity groups are unlikely to access careers services due to a lack of tailored, culturally competent services and staff. I will be travelling to Canada as a Fellow of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust in June 2019, to investigate Canadian approaches to career development and employability for First Nations tertiary students through observation and interviews with staff and clients of First Nations student services, careers services, universities (including experiential learning and WIL), leaders in academia and professional careers industry associations. The project seeks to gain an immersive understanding of tailored careers and employability initiatives for First Nations peoples at the university, community and professional levels, and explore new opportunities for Australian university careers services to provide culturally responsive support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students entering the workforce.

In this presentation, I will share my findings from the fellowship experience, discuss the implications for Australian careers and student equity practitioners, and explore potential avenues for universities to tailor our services to be more accessible and inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and graduates. This presentation will reflect on lessons from Canada and explore ways forward for Australian universities interested in creating and supporting narratives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success.

Learning outcomes
- Understand support for First Nations students’ careers and employability in Canadian universities
- Consider and discuss the potential applications of overseas approaches for the Australian context
- Explore examples and case studies from Canadian university practices

Presenter
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Farhana Laffernis is a careers and student support practitioner with experience working in the higher education and non-profit sectors, particularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and graduates and was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 2018 to further her work in this area. Farhana has eight years’ experience working within and in partnership with Australian universities, including Arc and the Nura Gili Indigenous Programs Unit at the University of New South Wales, and the University of Sydney Careers Centre. She is currently employed in the Division of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of New South Wales to identify and support projects that promote student equity, diversity and inclusion in the university community.