

# Partnering with Refugee Background Students at Victoria to support successful tertiary study

- Kristen Sharma | Senior Learning Adviser
- Student Learning | *Te Taiako*
- Victoria University of Wellington

# Overview

- Barriers to uni for refugee background students
- Why RBS are awesome
- History
- 2019
- Future

# Barriers to uni for RBS

- **English language** (O'Rourke, 2011; Stephenson & Baker, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018)
- **Different social/cultural capital** (O'Rourke, 2011; Stephenson & Baker, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018)
- **Finances** (O'Rourke, 2011; Naidoo et al., 2018; Felix, 2018)
- **Constraints on time** (Stephenson & Baker, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018)
- **Past/ongoing trauma** (O'Rourke, 2011; Stephenson & Baker, 2018; Felix, 2018)

# Barriers to uni for RBS cont.

- Deficit discourse of the institution (Stephenson & Baker, 2018)
- Systems/structures set up for “traditional” students  
(Stephenson & Baker, 2018)
- Lack of policy/Policy not implemented (Naidoo et al, 2018)
- Message: you don’t belong (O’Rourke, 2011)

# Why RBS are awesome

- **Highly motivated** (O'Rourke 2011; Stephenson & Baker, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2018)
- **Resilient** (O'Rourke, 2011; Stephenson & Baker, 2018)
- **Intellectually curious** (O'Rourke, 2011)
- **Want to use knowledge for others** (O'Rourke, 2011)
- **Multilingual language experts** (Naidoo et al., 2018)
- **Resourceful** (Stephenson & Baker, 2018)
- **Don't take anything for granted**
- **Study choices motivated by past experiences**
- **Respect multi-/bicultural perspectives**

# Who are our students?

- 2018: 184 students
- 2019: 200 students

# History

Research	Action
2006: GEOG 404 PAR with RB youth =>	2007: Network established
2008: GEOG 404 PAR =>	2008: Welcome event for RBS 2008: Global Remix established (2.5 years)
2010: Mary Roberts' report on challenges RBS face at VUW =>	
2010: Diane O'Rourke started research =>	2010: Drop-in centre for RBS (~5 years)
2011: Diane's article published =>	
2011: Changemakers et al. report =>	
	2012: Opening Doors booklet produced for RBS at Vic 2012: Equity Grants for RBS available 2013: RBS tick box on enrolment form 2015: Webpage for RBS
2017: GEOG 404	2017: Vic recognised RBS as Equity Group in Equity and Diversity Policy 2018: Vic included RBS in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

# 2019

## Momentum got going again. How?

- Fostering stronger community
  - Guiding students
  - Strategy and long term planning
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- Students know they are in the Equity Policy so feel more empowered to ask for support?



# Effects

- **Increased connections**
  - Min Ed.: using network to find uni students to give advice to new students, networking in new RBS
  - Students sending out comms to the network
- **Increased participation by RBS:**
  - Initiation of club for RBS: Vic without Barriers (VUW affiliated), hopes for the future
  - Catch-up afternoon teas

# Challenges

- How to sustain the momentum
- Students not wanting to identify as RBS, decisions around what to call people
- Only a small number actively involved at this stage so collaboration sometimes difficult
- Budget
- How to help facilitate students' big dreams (i.e. huge cultural event) with limited resources
- “Motivation porn” (Rivers and Webster, 2017)

# Next Steps

- Stronger representation in policy
- Increase in staff/student partnerships: Welcome event in O week
- Stronger connections with incoming students
- Grow Vic without Barriers
- Role to officially support, liaise, advocate for RBS
- Organise funding for 2020 events
- Find other champions of RBS (Are you in the audience?)

# What have I learnt?

- We need institutional buy-in
- We need to work in partnership with RB students
- Research underpins a lot of action
- Someone needs to take the lead in communicating regularly with the network
- People

# References

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