

RUN LEARNING AND TEACHING AWARDS 2023

Name: Caroline Cohrssen

Institution: University of New England

Title: Delivering Quality and Innovation in Early Childhood Teacher Education in Regional Australia

Application Category: Regional Education

Abstract: The shortage of degree-qualified early childhood teachers is a national workforce crisis. UNE has responded to the crisis by introducing an innovative degree that attracts diploma-qualified educators seeking to upskill to a bachelor's degree. Delivered fully online to provide equitable access to professional learning for all students, it particularly meets the needs of students in regional and remote areas who have limited access to on-campus study. The course responds to priorities in the field. It is underpinned by a learning trajectories approach and includes an explicit focus on family and community contexts, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), the arts, play pedagogies and child development.

Creative course design responds to students' calls for increased flexibility. Students prioritise topics that interest them and develop their own personalised learning journeys growing in self-confidence and self-efficacy throughout the process.

Improving the research/practice nexus, professional experience placements are undertaken at students' workplaces, supported by cutting-edge academic content developed by experts, appealing and interactive units, and the top-class student support for which UNE is renowned.

Significantly, innovative course design responds to regional and remote priorities: educators work while studying, allowing them to disseminate new knowledge and improve practice quality in real-time. Throughout the course, students create an electronic portfolio that links to the AITSL Teacher Standards and positions them as leaders in the field.