



Tapestry of Mental Health in Higher Education Webinar Series:

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

8 September 2021

An Australasian Mental Health and Higher Education
(AMHHEC) event presented in partnership with



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8 Sep 2021 | *Student Experiences Webinar*

Webinar Highlights:

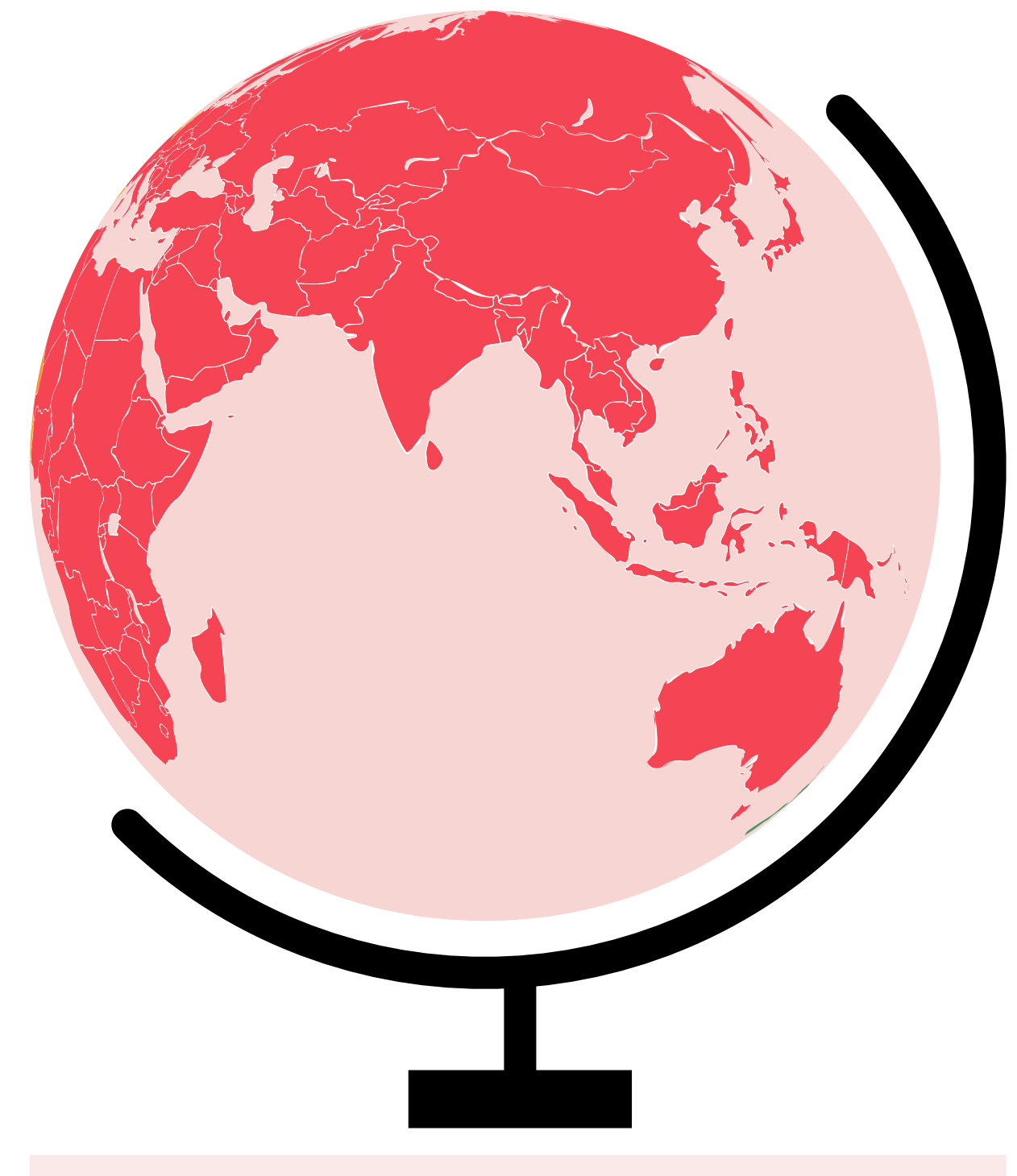
- Recognised the lived experiences of students during the COVID pandemic
- Outlined policy, institution strategies, and stepped care models to support students
- Explored ways to accommodate student diversity and differences with communication, learning, and seeking help



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Shared helpful strategies used by institutions in Australia and the Philippines. Our live audience included people located in:

- Australia
- Bangladesh
- India
- South Africa
- United Kingdom
- United States





AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Heidi

“COVID has thrown a very big spanner in the works for all of us, but it has had a particularly significant impact on our international student community.”

Heidi Piper
Director, Griffith International
Griffith University

Discussed international student experiences:

- Navigating uncertainty, severe financial impacts, and complex environments
- Separation from family and friends if they choose to study in Australia
- Separation from Australian university life if they choose to study overseas
- Grief and worry about family health

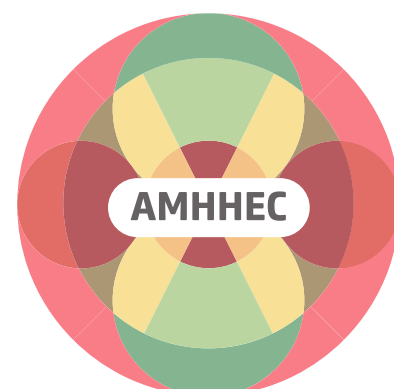


AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Prianca

“You have to make friends with people through a collaborate session where everyone’s watching class, nobody’s really chatting to each other, you’re not getting the full experience of being at uni and you feel a lot more isolated.”

Prianca Govendor
Biomedical Science Student and Student Ambassador
Griffith University

**How do we help
new students
make authentic
connections and
how do we help
students manage
their stress?**





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Helpful Strategies:

- Online trivia nights and coffee catch ups for international students to connect
- Peer support chat forums
- Sharing students' lived experience stories (e.g., Batyr and Roses in the Ocean)



AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Monserat

“We are really thankful for our students who have taken up the challenge to look into their fellow students’ mental health”

Dr. Monserat Guingona
Deputy Dean for Curriculum Development, School of
Medicine, Ateneo de Zamboanga University



AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Adriel

“Receiving some modicum of unconventional love ... What that means is having an anchor person who held on to hope when things were difficult for students.”

Adriel Burley
Project Co-Facilitator,
College of Healthcare Sciences, James Cook University

**What is your
student culture?**

**What are the
protective factors
and the pressure
points that
influence students?**



AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Larissa

“... there are still concerns around disclosing and seeking help because students don’t want to be seen as different.”

Larissa Silezar
Manager, Student Equity and Wellbeing
James Cook University



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Considerations:

- Accessibility of support services for student groups who are not continuing with healthcare appointments
- Systematic change to improve student wellbeing needs to continue after COVID
- Avoid generic mental health conversations, lead from a familiar point of view

How **fit for purpose**
is the higher
education sector
for responding to
diverse student
demographics?



AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Adriel

“Students were looking for sense of acceptance ... which is very much the case for First Nations Students of Australia and likewise for international students”

Adriel Burley
Project Co-Facilitator,
College of Healthcare Sciences, James Cook University



AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Prianca

“It’s so monumentally important to recognise that there are issues coming up now that maybe haven’t existed for a lot of our students before.”

Prianca Govendor
Biomedical Science Student and Student Ambassador
Griffith University



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Considerations:

- Increase in isolation and homesickness for both international *and* domestic students
- Difficulties related to managing family responsibilities, moving back in with family due to financial and housing pressures, home schooling, and limited access to devices



AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Fortunato

“Communication is really important. Keeping in touch with the students, even virtually, is very rewarding.”

Dr. Fortunato Cristobal
Dean, School of Medicine
Ateneo de Zamboanga University



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Helpful Strategies:

- Strengthened mentoring program to increase connectivity with students
- Financial aid and support packages including food and provision of educational devices
- Access to telehealth services, mental health resources, and mental health modules



AMHHEC Webinar Panel Presenter, Larissa

“It doesn’t take much for us to make a difference to somebody’s day, to somebody’s life ... It could be something as easy as making sure the student knows there is support available”

Larissa Silezar
Manager, Student Equity and Wellbeing
James Cook University



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