ELIZABETH HITCHES: Welcome everyone to our 5th session for today already. So this is our 5th session for the online symposium. And just note that we have closed captions available for this session that can be enabled by accessing the CC button. Please also note that there should be a link in the chat to our live captions for today if you'd like to access those via your browser.

Now, this session, I am pleased to introduce, is Fostering Inclusive Learning, Southern Cross Model Unit Site Standards. And we have Dr Polly Lai with us today from Southern Cross University. This presentation will go for 15 minutes with a 5-minute break for questions. So over to you Polly.

POLLY LAI: Thank you, Elizabeth. Hello everyone. My name is Polly Lai. I am a senior lecturer at the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Southern Cross University. In today's presentation I will talk about how we developed this Southern Cross Model Unit Site Standards to foster inclusive learning at Southern Cross Universities.

So today's outline in the past 3 years, Southern Cross University has gone through a significant transition in redesign. Today I will introduce what is the new Southern Cross model first, and then talk about the reason why the new Southern Cross model meet the unit site standards and what is the framework of these unit site standards, and how do we implement this within the university.

So what is the Southern Cross model? In the redesign we do the transition to make the changes from 12 week semester system to 6 weeks term. So from the screen you can see we offer 6 terms per year, and the new students will start from term 1 in early March, and then takes 6 weeks to complete. A full-time student will be able to enrol in two units for each term, but sometimes based on their capacity they may enrol in only one unit. However, they need to complete 8 units/year. That's a full-time student requirement. So we provide students with this kind of flexibility to choose in which term they would like to enrol into two units and which term they would like to enrol for one unit.

In general, the majority of students will start from term 1 or start from term 3 and then continuing the following terms. In this 6 week term system, based on each unit we have three components, including self-assess learning component, and then tutorial, and then workshops. In the self-assess learning component, students are required to have 15 to 20 hours of study load per unit per week. So a student will go through the online weekly modules to do the reading interactive activities, group discussion and self-reflection, and then they bring their output to the tutorial for discussion or for feedback. The tutorial takes two hours/week, either in person or online, and then also with more active learning. For the workshop, it will be online, one hour/week.

So the Southern Cross Model Unit Site Standards, we only focus on self-assess learning components here, because that is the online unit site. As you can see, the Southern Cross Model is a blended learning model, so for each week students will be able to assess the online modules weekly, and then in a couple of weeks the workshop and tutorial. The maximum we have three assessments, but some units they only have two assessments for the unit completion.

So based on all of this why does Southern Cross Model really need these unit site standards? So as I mentioned before, it is a blank learning model and we also focus on self-assess learning component. So in order to foster inclusive and effective online learning experience for all students, we came out with these nine main outcomes we would like to achieve through this unit site standards. Then you can see from the screen, for example, the uniformity, the standards are used to ensure that the learning experience is consistent across different units, different courses and different faculties. Some students, they may have two double majors in different faculties, and provide students with a reliable and predictable educational experience.

Enhanced student engagement, the standards are used to promote the inclusion of interactive elements, for example like discussion forum, like chart or collaborated projects that gives students the ability to actively engage with the content and with their peers.

We also have these academic development. We would like to use these standards to promote the culture of continuing professional learning across our faculty members, also to support and have this effective use of learning tools and methodology in their teaching practice.

The most important thing is the quality assurance and accessibility and inclusion. So in accessibility and inclusivity, we would like to achieve equal access for all the students, and also we take universal design for learning into consideration to create a flexible learning environment that can accommodate each individual's differences. Why we start to try to think about this is because our students are from almost everywhere. You will see on the screen like everywhere in Australia. So some will access the monthly modules online, or some they will go to the online virtual classroom.

We also have students in China and PNG. For example, the students from PNG, they have no stable internet access. So therefore, we will provide printable and standalone material for them to study without internet access. And for students in China, we also provide Chinese captions in videos to help them overcome the language barriers.

So what is the framework of this Southern Cross Model Unit Site Standards? We take into account and also underpinned by several online learning theories, for example, Moore's three types of interactions, Garrison's Online Community of Inquiry, and Biggs Constructive Alignment. And then taking universal design for learning into consideration to enhance inclusive and effective online learning experiences for each individual.

So you can see there are three domains in our unit site standards. The first one, teaching presence and communication. This one aligns with the universal design for learning guidelines, providing action and expression. For example, multiple media we are going to use to promote like teaching presence and foster the learning interactions and their communication.

Second domain is learning materials and activities. This one aligns with the engagement and representation. So for example, to provide scaffolding and interactions through the weekly online modules to promote students' self-regulation, as well as having alternatives for visual and auditory information. So for the material we provide they will have a different form of representation to fit into different learning preferences from the students.

The last domain, constructive alignment and assessment, which is about goal setting. If we have a clear learning outcomes and set out the expectation for students, and then also to help them to plan and have a strategy development. Then by assessment, how they acquire knowledge and the knowledge they learn by the end of each term. So this is the three domains of our unit site standards.

Regarding to implementation of these standards in the Southern Cross Model, under each domain we categorise the standards into three levels. So you will see the first one, "established" level, which means it is the minimum requirement for a unit site before going online. So all the unit sites, before they go online, they need to meet the requirement of minimum standards, and the educational designers in central locations will measure it's all meeting the minimum standards before they go online.

Second, developing levels means these items are the priority for the first round of the revision. So after they deliver the first time before the next offering, we will do the review for the unit site and then see if any potential needs or potential enhancement we can do.

The last one, "innovative", which means they are more for future improvement. The user for these unit site standards, as you can see on the screen, that is one of the domain details for each items. Actually, it is quite detailed and clear for educational designers and our academic staff as well. Our educational designers use these standards to evaluate the unit. Like I said, after the first delivery they will use that to review the unit or start the conversation with academic staff to address potential needs and enhancement and also revert back to students' feedback.

Our academic staff, they can use these as their peer review tools or their self-assessment tools to refer on their unit site design in their teaching practice.

So that's the introduction of our Southern Cross Model Unit Site Standards and how we incorporate universal design for learning into the standards to foster inclusive and effective learning experience for all students. Thank you. Any questions?

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much, Polly. So one question has already come through. So I am going to attend to that. Actually we have got another one in the chat. So I am going to try to keep across this. Please keep putting your questions in the chat as we go. Starting with the chat, we have one: have you got much feedback from students on how they are finding the model?

POLLY LAI: You mean the Southern Cross Model? Actually, yes. We already got all the transitions already takes three years. The first year, yeah, honestly is not so good, because suddenly students have trouble with study period and they shortened it to six weeks. But slowly from the second year and third year they become better and better. So then we also find out if the year 1 students, when they get into the university and they already experience this 6 week term, they are quite it is really quickly to get used to because it is quite intensive. And the positive comments from them is they can really concentrate on just one unit or two units. If you compare to 12 weeks starting period, normally you need to enrol four units as a full-time student, right. Then for each unit you have similar weeks for your assessment due date. So in that week you may need to complete four assessments and in this six week term you may need to complete one or two assessments. That was some feedback from students.

However, if a part time student sometimes they will have a little bit of a negative comment about they don't have time to get sick, or they don't have time to take care of their children if they get sick. With only six weeks, they really need to focus on what they need to learn and then have all the assessment complete within six weeks. Yep.

ELIZABETH: Thanks so much, Polly. I have got a couple more come through the chat as well. Kate is asking: where does the responsibility for final sign off of the unit sit once the unit has been checked against the standards?

Polly: The responsibility for final sign off, so our educational designer will work with the academic tool and design and develop the unit site. The educational designer, they are responsible for the introduction of the site, and the academic they are content experts. So the final site will be after we do the QA in our centre. So whole unit site we will run once quality assurance, and then the course coordinator, in some may be course coordinator, they will do a final site check. Actually, already go through all the unit site checklist and then we will provide the document to the program or a course coordinator to do the final sign off.

ELIZABETH: Thanks, Polly. I think we have a few more questions here. Tanya is asking: have you transitioned all units and, if so, how long did this take?

POLLY: Yes. So far we have been transitioning more than a thousand units. It takes I would say the first two years is really crazy, and this year, the third year, already slowed down a bit. We only have maybe 100 units left. So yeah, it takes two and a half to three years. But it is now one unit takes three years, of course. For one unit, it may take three to five months from the scratch until the unit complete.

ELIZABETH: Thank you. Next question: how is meeting of the minimum standard ensured? Is there a checklist to tick or review from an additional person?

POLLY: There is a checklist, like you see from my presentation it is the items, but we develop a checklist for educational designer and the unit coordinator. Then, of course, it is a two people they need to have the idea on the same page with each items to make sure it is a tick or partially achieve and maybe something we can do better in the future. So all the documents will be rated.

ELIZABETH: Fantastic. Melanie is asking, when we develop study plans for our students, additional time to submit assessments and/or additional teaching support are common adjustments. How does your model address this?

POLLY: Study plans for additional time for submit assessment yeah, normally the final assessment submission is no later than Monday, week 7. But let's say they have some reason for consideration, and then the adjustment time is within a week. So after week 7, that week is a final assessment submission, and for the course coordinator or our unit coordinator to do the marking and grading, and then week 8 will be a break and then another week will be the orientation week for the next term. So we will have one week to adjust the time. Do you mean like student academic skills support, this kind of support? We would have learning zones so students can make appointments with one-on-one learning advisors based on like, for example, academic writing, or a language, or a mathematic, and that would be outside of their official starting time. But it is based on each individual students, what they need.

ELIZABETH: Thank you. We've got about a minute left. But another question has come in about how academic or teaching staff have responded to that transition. So how have they responded to this transition towards this model of learning?

POLLY: It is a very good question. Yeah. At the beginning, not so good. Yeah, of course, no one likes change, right. So yeah, at the beginning not so good. And they used to teach in the classroom and that's what they used to do and they are really good on that, and suddenly the majority of the material you need to have that in online unit site and that's something for them. They are kind of like, no, not really comfortable to do that. So that's why our educational designer has been trained how to communicate with the academic or teaching staff, and to make sure what they really need to do is to make sure the material and content are accurate and up to date, and the instructional and learning design from our centre will fully support doing this transition.

ELIZABETH: Thanks, Polly. In our last 30 seconds before we wrap up, we have got a question here about how do you sell to people that a course or unit needs to be updated to be meeting these standards? How do you sell it to them?

POLLY: Students' feedback. That's the most direct. "This is students' feedback and they have these comments and maybe we can do something to improve." And, of course, we don't need to be perfect at once. We just need to move forward one step and then make a little bit better, and then we can do the review later on. So, yeah. That's all, powerful student feedback, yep.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much. Thanks, Polly, for this really insightful session.

POLLY: Thank you. Thank you, everyone.