RMIT's Signature Student Experience:

Access, Belonging and Capability

A framework for how RMIT supports every student throughout their learning journey



RMIT UNIVERSITY

Our commitment

Every student who chooses RMIT brings with them a set of aspirations — for their career, their learning and their life. RMIT's commitment is to ensure that the university experience actively supports those aspirations, not just for some students, but for all of them.

That commitment takes a specific form. Across every campus, every program, and every point in the student journey, RMIT is working to ensure that students can **access** what they need when they need it, that they **belong** in a community that values and respects them, and that they build the **capability** to pursue their aspirations in work, life and future learning.

These three ideas — Access, Belonging and Capability — are not aspirational additions to the student experience. They are the foundation of it. Together, they form RMIT's signature student experience: **the ABC framework**.

The ABC framework sits alongside RMIT's pedagogical signature of Active, Applied, Authentic learning. The parallel is deliberate. The way RMIT teaches and the way RMIT supports students reflect the same underlying values — applied, human-centred and oriented toward real-world outcomes. Together, the two frameworks reinforce one another: Active, Applied and Authentic learning shapes the learning experience, while Access, Belonging and Capability create the conditions in which that learning can flourish.

Delivering this commitment depends on both well-designed services and well-supported educators and professional staff — the two are inseparable.

Delivering this commitment is a shared responsibility across the university. The ABC framework is intended to guide how RMIT designs systems, services, learning environments and student experiences. It does not create additional responsibilities for individual educators or professional staff. Rather, it provides a common framework for ensuring that staff are equipped, supported and connected to help students succeed.

This document describes what Access, Belonging and Capability mean at RMIT, how they were developed with students, and how they connect to services and programs.

Why this matters now

RMIT is one of Australia's largest universities, with more than 100,000 students studying across higher education and vocational education. Our student community is genuinely diverse — in background, in aspirations, in the challenges students bring with them, and in the ways they learn best.

That diversity is a strength. It is also a responsibility. A university that serves students well overall but falls short in practice — where strong average outcomes mask uneven experiences, where access extends to many but not all, where belonging is fostered for some but not others, and where capability is built in those already advantaged but not in those facing barriers — is not yet living up to its values.

While RMIT performs strongly in many areas, student feedback and institutional data show opportunities to improve how consistently students can access support, develop a sense of belonging and build capability throughout their time at university.

RMIT's response to this challenge is the Student Experience Tapestry — a multi-year transformation program running from 2026 to 2028 as one of RMIT's Horizon 2 signature initiatives under *Knowledge with Action to 2031*.

Tapestry is working to create a student experience where students can easily find the support they need, receive help before challenges become barriers, and are supported by educators and professional staff who are equipped with the tools, systems and institutional support needed to help students succeed.

The ABC framework is the student-facing expression of this work — and its purpose is captured in a single commitment: every student can access what they need, feel they belong, and build the capability to flourish.

The ABC framework

Just as RMIT's signature pedagogy — Active, Applied and Authentic — guides the learning and teaching experience, the ABC framework guides how RMIT designs, prioritises and delivers support across the student experience.

The ABC framework reflects and gives practical expression to RMIT's broader strategic direction under *Knowledge with Action,* the *Education Plan*, the *Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) Framework* and the *Living Places Plan*.

While these strategies, plans and frameworks guide specific areas of university activity, the ABC framework provides a common lens for designing, delivering and evaluating the student experience as a whole.

Together, these strategies share a common ambition: to expand participation, foster inclusive and connected learning experiences, and enable students to develop the knowledge, skills and relationships they need to contribute to an inclusive and sustainable future through learning, co-curricular participation and student life.

This commitment is shaped and delivered in partnership with students. RMIT's student experience is not something we build for students alone, but something we continually create with them.



Access

Every student, regardless of background, circumstance, or identity, can engage fully with university life from the moment they first encounter RMIT.

Access is not a threshold crossed once. It is a condition sustained across the entire student lifecycle.

At RMIT, Access means more than whether a service exists. It means students can find it, navigate to it, and receive it in a form that works for them. It means the experience of seeking help is straightforward rather than frustrating, and the support on offer is genuinely appropriate for a diverse student community.

In practice, Access means:

- Services and information that are easy to find, consistent in quality, and available through channels that reflect how students seek help, while remaining accessible and responsive to a diverse student community.
- An enrolment and transition experience that removes unnecessary friction at the moments of highest risk — from offer to acceptance through to the first weeks of study.
- Equitable access to support for students from under-represented backgrounds, including First Nations students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disability, and students studying online or at a distance.
- Proactive outreach and early identification of need, using data to identify students who may benefit from support before challenges become barriers.

Access also has a longer-term dimension. RMIT is committed to widening participation in tertiary education — creating pathways into and through education for students who have historically faced barriers to higher and vocational education, and ensuring more people can benefit from learning, opportunity and social mobility throughout their lives.

Belonging

Every student experiences RMIT as a place where they are genuinely known, valued and connected — to their peers, to their learning and to the broader RMIT community.

Students are more likely to persist and succeed when they experience a sense of connection to people, places and purpose. The evidence is clear: students who feel they belong at their institution are more likely to persist, achieve academically and engage fully with university life. Belonging, therefore, is not incidental to student outcomes — it is a precondition for them[i].

Belonging is strengthened when inclusion is intentionally designed into the student experience from the outset, rather than added later. It grows through inclusive learning experiences, supportive relationships, welcoming physical and digital spaces, opportunities for participation and access to student services[ii].

At RMIT, Belonging means:

- A campus and community environment that is safe, inclusive and respectful for every student, regardless of background, identity, or mode of study.
- An orientation and transition experience that builds genuine connection to the RMIT community, not only familiarity with administrative processes.
- Activities, events and spaces designed for connection, creativity and community that enable students to build meaningful relationships with peers, staff, and the broader RMIT community[iii].
- A student voice and partnership approach that treats students as active participants in shaping the university, recognising that belonging deepens when students have meaningful opportunities to influence the community of which they are a part.
- Mental health and wellbeing support embedded in a community where seeking support is normalised and positive peer relationships are recognised as protective.
- Cultural safety and responsiveness, particularly for First Nations students, for whom belonging at a university requires active and sustained institutional commitment.

Belonging is a whole-of-university responsibility. It is shaped as much by what happens in the classroom as by what happens in a service interaction, as much by how students are supported when things go wrong as by how they are welcomed when they first arrive.

Capability

Every student graduates from RMIT ready to navigate work, life and lifelong learning with confidence.

Capability is built progressively throughout the student journey through learning, participation, reflection, relationships and experience. It enables students to develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and connections needed to pursue their aspirations, navigate complexity, and grow academically, personally and professionally during their time at RMIT.

RMIT students should graduate not only with discipline expertise but with the creativity, adaptability, digital confidence, critical thinking, ethical judgement and professional capability needed to thrive in work, life and further learning. This includes the confidence to navigate a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence and ongoing technological, social and environmental change.

At RMIT, Capability means:

- Academic and learning support that develops students as independent learners — building study skills, research capability and academic confidence, not only supporting progression through assessment.
- Career development and industry engagement services that connect students with industry, build professional readiness and support the transition from study to work across the full student lifecycle.
- Co-curricular opportunities — including clubs, sport, volunteering, and leadership — that build skills, experiences and networks valued by employers and communities.
- Academic integrity and skills development that strengthen students' capacity to produce their best work and to understand the value and purpose of that work.
- Equitable graduate outcomes with particular attention to cohorts where the gap between academic completion and employment is most pronounced.

Capability is reflected in graduate outcomes, but it is developed throughout a student's time at RMIT. Every student grows during their time at RMIT — academically, personally, and as a contributor to their community.

How the ABC framework was developed

The ABC framework was developed through a sustained process of listening to students, consulting with staff across the university, and drawing on evidence about what contributes to student success and a positive student experience.

It is intended not only to articulate what matters, but to guide decision-making and service design across the student experience — particularly as RMIT invests in digital transformation, ensuring technology enhances the experience where it adds value and that human support remains central where it matters most.

In late 2025 and early 2026, RMIT undertook a discovery process across the student experience, consulting with students, the RMIT University Student Union (RUSU), the Student Experience Advisory Group (SEAG), educators and professional staff. This work was informed by analysis of student support trends, student feedback, service outcomes, and student satisfaction data across both higher and vocational education.

That work identified where the student experience was working well and where it was not and shaped the priorities that the Student Experience Tapestry program is now addressing. It was also informed by RMIT's strategic direction and emerging national expectations for equity, student voice, and student success.

The framework is designed to be stable across the Horizon 2 period and beyond — a north star that guides investment, service design and accountability — while the specific initiatives and programs that give it expression will evolve as RMIT learns what is working.

Students as partners in this work

The ABC framework is not something RMIT delivers *to* students. It is something RMIT develops and delivers *with* them.

Student voice is embedded across the design, delivery and evaluation of major student experience initiatives, including the Student Experience Tapestry program. RMIT's Student Voice and Partnership Framework — published alongside this document — describes how student representation, consultation and co-design, and feedback mechanisms are embedded within RMIT's governance and student experience systems.

For the ABC framework specifically, students are engaged through SEAG, through RUSU, through consultative committees and advisory boards, and through targeted research and co-design activities at key points in the Tapestry program's lifecycle. Where major student experience initiatives are developed, students are engaged from discovery through to evaluation — not informed of outcomes after the fact.

Engagement is designed to be meaningful and proportionate to the decision or initiative, and is embedded within existing governance, academic and service processes. This engagement is also part of a continuous improvement cycle — listening to students, analysing what we hear, acting on it, and monitoring the impact — with a commitment to closing the loop by demonstrating how student feedback has shaped decisions and outcomes.

RMIT's commitment is that students have meaningful opportunities to shape significant changes to the student experience.

Accountability for this framework

Executive accountability for the ABC framework sits with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education. Operational responsibility for implementation sits with the Executive Director of Students.

The ABC framework guides how RMIT designs and coordinates the student experience. Its purpose is to create greater clarity, consistency, and support for both students and staff.

Delivering this framework requires the university to equip staff with the tools, systems, and support they need — the responsibility sits with the institution, not with individuals.

Progress against the ABC framework will be monitored through student feedback, participation and success indicators, service performance measures, and graduate outcomes data. These measures will help RMIT understand whether students are increasingly able to access what they need, feel they belong, and build the capability to achieve their aspirations.

This framework is a living document. It will be reviewed annually and updated in response to evidence from student surveys, service data, and student engagement activities. Material changes to the framework will be subject to student consultation before they are finalised.

Through Access, Belonging and Capability, RMIT is giving practical expression to its commitment to applied, inclusive and impactful education. The ABC framework reflects our ambition to be a university where more people can participate, where every student feels they belong, and where graduates are prepared to contribute to a rapidly changing world.

End notes

[i] Kahu, E. R., & Nelson, K. (2018). Student engagement in the educational interface: Understanding the mechanisms of student success. *Higher Education Research & Development, 37*(1), 58–71.

Lizzio, A. (2006). *Designing an orientation and transition strategy for commencing students: A conceptual summary of research and practice*. Griffith University.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2019). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Thomas, L. (2012). *Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Tinto, V. (2012). *Leaving college: Rethinking institutional action* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

[ii] Wilson, R., Murray, G., & Clarke, B. (2018). The RMIT belonging strategy: Fostering student engagement in higher education. In D. Wache & D. Houston (Eds.), *Research and Development in Higher Education: (Re)Valuing Higher Education*, (Vol. 41, pp. 257–266). HERDSA.

[iii] Morieson, L., Murray, G., Wilson, R., Clarke, B., & Lukas, K. (2018). Belonging in space: Informal learning spaces and the student experience. *Journal of Learning Spaces, 7*(2), 12–22.