

## RUN LEARNING AND TEACHING AWARDS 2023

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**Title:** From Fairy Tale to Reality: Building Pathways to Success for Regional Students

**Abstract:** Equitable access to higher education is a critical issue in regional Australian universities, especially given the shortage of teachers and early childhood educators. To address this, we developed the Precision, Alignment, and Mentoring (PAM) model at UniSC. The Goldilocks fairy tale illustrates the PAM model's implementation for engaging and retaining underrepresented regional students in undergraduate UniSC Early Childhood programs while fostering their aspirations for postgraduate studies. This aligns with the Australian Universities Accord's recommendations on quality, accessibility, and research.

The PAM model integrates student voices and needs with regulatory requirements to create a tiered program offering, combined with personalised mentoring of undergraduate students. This allows seamless transitions from the Early Childhood Diploma to Bachelor programs or concurrent enrollment in Primary Education and Early Childhood programs. These programs meet external regulatory standards set by QCT and ACECQA, enabling students to work as practitioners while studying, thereby supporting the regional economy and their financial sustainability.

The PAM model helps students find their 'just right' academic fit early in their studies, extending their capabilities beyond their initial Diploma expectations. Collaboration between undergraduate and postgraduate staff and students drives the Mentoring component, supporting long-term academic ambitions, including postgraduate studies.