

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Education Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) Western Sydney University acknowledges the Eora, Darug, D'harawal, and Wiradjuri Peoples who are the traditional owners of the land on which the University's campuses are located, and thanks them for their support and contribution to its work.

(2) The University's strategic plan commits the University to creating partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and communities that ensure a culturally rich, relevant and engaged learning experience with embedded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples heritage and culture.

(3) This policy provides the University's principles, commitments and objectives for developing and delivering education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. A key attribute of all University graduates will be a deep understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples heritage and culture and a demonstrated ability to apply this knowledge to practice.

(4) This policy recognises and respects the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Employment Policy](#) which enacts the University's principles and objectives for, not only the employment and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, but all staff who are responsible for learning, teaching and research in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

(5) This policy has been developed, having regard to a number of contemporary reports. These include Australia's national and international obligations including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by the Australian Government; the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy; Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017 - 2020; The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies and the recommendations in the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Final Report 2012.

(6) This policy is to be read in conjunction with the University's [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Employment Policy](#), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Cultural Protocols in the workplace, [Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy](#), [Graduate Attributes](#), [Academic Staff Agreement](#), [Professional Staff Agreement](#), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Research Strategy.

## Section 2 - Definitions

(7) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this policy:

- a. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence and capabilities means student and staff knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' cultures, histories, contemporary realities and protocols, and proficiency to engage and work effectively in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' contexts and expectations (adapted from Universities Australia, Guiding Principles for Developing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities, October 2011).

- b. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples mean (as adopted by the Commonwealth of Australia for administrative purposes) any person who:
  - i. is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent;
  - ii. identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; and
  - iii. is accepted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in which they live as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- c. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Education means:
  - i. educational opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; and
  - ii. the opportunity for all Australians to gain knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, contemporary realities and protocols.
- d. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Research refers to:
  - i. research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their perspectives and issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
  - ii. research conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.
- e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' worldviews, histories, cultures, law and lore, values, beliefs, languages, lifestyles and roles;
- f. Parity means 'equality' or 'equivalence' of participation and outcomes in higher education between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians;
- g. Student means any student admitted to undertake a University course;
- h. Student Life-Cycle means the recurring University processes and experiences for individuals from prospective student, applicant, student, alumni, and possible donor or parent of a future student; and
- i. Worldview means a set of beliefs and values that are honoured and held by a number of people.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(8) The University will work to establish itself as a site of exemplary practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' education and research.

### Principles

(9) The following principles underpin the University's approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' learning, teaching and research:

- a. A whole-of-University and equitable approach across the student life-cycle;
- b. Accountability of all members of the University, senior staff and educators across Schools, University Research Institutes and Divisions;
- c. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledges and voices in all that we do;
- d. Student retention, completion, growth and success at all levels of education and research;
- e. Recognition and valuing of traditional and contemporary histories, values, languages, culture and knowledge;
- f. Respect and civility among and between staff and students;
- g. Opportunities for engaging in the governance, decision making, planning, delivery and evaluation of education and research; and
- h. Proactive support of students and staff through co-creation, collaboration, consultation and inclusion.

### Commitments

(10) The University makes the following commitments in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples'

education and research:

a. Education and research governance:

- i. recognising the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to self-determination and engagement in decision making that impacts on their own lives and maintaining, controlling, protecting and developing their heritage and culture;
- ii. engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to lead and contribute to the direction of education and implementation of the University's education and research, including participation on decision making bodies;
- iii. ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education is specifically included in all major strategies and plans;
- iv. acknowledging that a greater understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledges, skills, values and contemporary issues will advance our communities;
- v. identifying research that has been designed and conducted in accordance with international and national requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
- vi. embedding lead practice and collaboration with government and higher education providers to improve support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' education, training and research.

b. Transition to higher education:

- i. enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in urban, regional and remote areas to access, grow and succeed in higher education;
- ii. providing University admission pathways to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- iii. building on partnerships with schools and vocational educational institutions to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to transition to university;
- iv. working with professional associations and employers to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to undertake higher education.

c. Student success:

- i. providing socio-economic, cultural and academic support to achieve parity in the access, participation, retention, completion and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

d. Cultural competences and capabilities for all students:

- i. promoting understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary perspectives, knowledge, spirituality, skills, values and culture across the University;
- ii. assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to develop positive identities that are supported by their knowledge of, and pride in, their own cultural heritage and academic, technological and social skills;
- iii. producing graduates who demonstrate cultural capability and have the skills and knowledge to provide genuinely competent services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

e. Teaching and learning programs

- i. supporting and mentoring staff to ensure that learning environments, curricula, resources and assessments enable students to achieve the required Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate attributes;
- ii. building the capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to progress into teaching, learning and research positions within the university;
- iii. recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' identified roles in developing and contributing to teaching, learning and research programs;
- iv. responding to issues that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' socio-economic and cultural priorities;

- v. ensuring the University has the ability to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as an education provider of choice;
  - vi. ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content is appropriately attributed when developing and delivering to students; and
  - vii. ensuring teachers graduate with the qualifications, training and cultural competence to promote excellence and the aspirations, skills and academic achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- f. Knowledge and research
- i. recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' systems of knowledge and worldviews are vital to shaping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' education and research;
  - ii. preserving, promoting, protecting and appropriately attributing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' knowledge;
  - iii. supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and research projects that improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and address the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples graduate attributes;
  - iv. ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is culturally safe and ethical;
  - v. providing appropriate supervision to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including co-supervision arrangements where appropriate; and
  - vi. designing and conducting research in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Ethical Research: Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies.
- g. Cultural and pastoral support
- i. providing dedicated staff and services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' experience at the University through the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education;
  - ii. ensuring the University's campuses and study locations are welcoming, respectful, supportive, non-discriminatory and free of harassment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, and provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with study spaces where they feel culturally safe; and
  - iii. equipping all University members with critical skills to recognise and counter prejudice in all its forms.
- h. Educational funding
- i. ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander government-specific funding supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' success;
  - ii. providing other financial support to those who have established Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status to support their education, where possible.
- i. Career transition
- i. supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' career choices and employment opportunities both within and beyond their communities;
  - ii. working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, government, industry, professional associations, employer groups, and other non-government organisations in Greater Western Sydney, and the University's Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Engagement to meet workforce requirements and grow the number of employed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates;
  - iii. encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership of professional bodies; and
  - iv. encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to undertake post-graduate education.

## Section 4 - Procedures

(11) All areas of the University are jointly responsible for implementing this policy and it will be reflected in the University's staff performance management system.

(12) The University endorses consultation in planning and implementing activities initiated in support of this policy.

## Section 5 - Guidelines

(13) This policy was developed having regard to the following:

- a. Council of Australian Governments' Education Council, [Western Sydney University Indigenous Strategy 2020 - 2025](#)
- b. Commonwealth [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#), [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy](#)
- c. [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council \(ATSHEAC\) Recommendations](#)
- d. The University's [Western Sydney University's Reconciliation Statement](#)
- e. Universities Australia, [National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities](#)
- f. [Closing the Gap, Australian National Report on Schooling, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage](#)
- g. [United Nations, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2008](#)
- h. [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Ethical Research: Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies](#)

(14) The [NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977](#) makes racial discrimination and vilification unlawful in New South Wales. The University's [Discrimination, Harassment, Vilification and Victimisation Prevention Policy](#) set out its commitments to providing an environment free from unlawful discrimination, unlawful harassment, vilification, victimisation, and unlawful adverse action and ensuring that employees and students are treated with integrity and respect.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
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