

Indigenous Australian 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 Indigenous Australian students, staff and communities that ensure a culturally rich, relevant and engaged learning experience with embedded Indigenous Australians' heritage and culture.

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

(4) This policy recognises and respects the [Indigenous Australian Employment Policy](#) which enacts the University's principles and objectives for, not only the employment and development of Indigenous Australian staff, but all staff who are responsible for learning, teaching and research in relation to Indigenous Australian 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 \(AEP\)](#); 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 [Indigenous Australian Employment Policy](#), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Cultural Protocols in the workplace, [Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy](#), [Curriculum Design and Approvals Procedures - Graduate Attributes](#), [Academic Staff Agreement](#), [Professional Staff Agreement](#), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Research Strategy, [Western Sydney University Indigenous Strategy 2020 - 2025](#) and [Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy 2023 - 2032](#).

Section 2 - Definitions

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

- a. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is a national institution focused exclusively on the diverse history, cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia
- b. Indigenous Australian means (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. Indigenous Australian Cultural Competence and Capabilities means student and staff knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australians' cultures, histories, contemporary realities and protocols, and proficiency to engage and work effectively in Indigenous Australians' contexts and expectations (adapted from Universities Australia, Guiding Principles for Developing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities, October 2011)
- d. Indigenous Australian Education means:
 - i. educational opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous Australians and
 - ii. the opportunity for all Australians to gain knowledge about Indigenous Australian cultures, histories, contemporary realities and protocols
- e. Indigenous Australian Research refers to:
 - i. research with Indigenous Australians and their perspectives and issues impacting on Indigenous Australians
 - ii. research conducted by Indigenous Australian researchers
- f. Indigenous Australian Perspectives means Indigenous Australians' worldviews, histories, cultures, law and lore, values, beliefs, languages, lifestyles and roles
- g. Parity means 'equality' or 'equivalence' of participation and outcomes in higher education between Indigenous Australians and other Australians
- h. Student means any student admitted to undertake a University program
- i. 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
- j. 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 Indigenous Australian education and research.

Principles

(9) The following principles underpin the University's approach to Indigenous Australian 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 (Institutes) and Divisions
- c. Embedding Indigenous Australian 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 Indigenous Australians' education and research:

- a. Education and research governance:
 - i. Recognising the right of Indigenous Australians 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 Indigenous Australians 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 Indigenous Australian education is specifically included in all major strategies and plans
 - iv. Acknowledging that a greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous Australian 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 Indigenous Australians and
 - vi. Embedding lead practice and collaboration with government and higher education providers to improve support for Indigenous Australians' education, training and research.
- b. Transition to higher education:
 - i. Enabling Indigenous Australians in urban, regional and remote areas to access, grow and succeed in higher education
 - ii. Providing University admission pathways to Indigenous Australian students
 - iii. Building on partnerships with schools and vocational educational institutions to encourage Indigenous Australians to transition to university
 - iv. Working with professional associations and employers to support Indigenous Australian 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 Indigenous Australian students
- d. Cultural competences and capabilities for all students:
 - i. Promoting understanding and appreciation of Indigenous Australian traditional and contemporary perspectives, knowledge, spirituality, skills, values and culture across the University
 - ii. Assisting Indigenous Australian 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 Indigenous Australians
- e. Learning and Teaching programs:
 - i. Supporting and mentoring staff to ensure that learning environments, curricula, resources and assessments enable students to achieve the required Indigenous Australian graduate attributes
 - ii. Building the capacity for Indigenous Australian students to progress into learning, teaching and research positions within the University
 - iii. Recognising the importance of Indigenous Australians' identified roles in developing and contributing to learning, teaching and research programs
 - iv. Responding to issues that impact Indigenous Australians' socio-economic and cultural priorities
 - v. Ensuring the University has the ability to meet the needs of Indigenous Australians as an education provider of choice
 - vi. Ensuring Indigenous Australian 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 Indigenous Australian students
- f. Knowledge and research:

- i. Recognising Indigenous Australians' systems of knowledge and worldviews are vital to shaping Indigenous Australians' education and research
 - ii. Preserving, promoting, protecting and appropriately attributing Indigenous Australians' knowledge
 - iii. Supporting Indigenous Australian research and research projects that improve the lives of Indigenous Australians and address the Indigenous Australians graduate attributes
 - iv. Ensuring Indigenous Australian research and research with Indigenous Australians is culturally safe and ethical
 - v. Providing appropriate supervision to Indigenous Australian 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 [AIATSIS, Ethical Research: Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies](#)
- g. Cultural and pastoral support:
- i. Providing dedicated staff and services to support Indigenous Australians' 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 Indigenous Australian students and staff, and provide Indigenous Australian 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 Indigenous Australian government-specific funding supports Indigenous Australians' success
 - ii. Providing other financial support to those who have established Indigenous Australian status to support their education, where possible
- i. Career transition:
- i. Supporting Indigenous Australian students' career choices and employment opportunities both within and beyond their communities
 - ii. Working with Indigenous Australian communities, government, industry, professional associations, employer groups, and other non-government organisations in Greater Western Sydney, to meet workforce requirements and grow the number of employed Indigenous Australian graduates
 - iii. Encouraging Indigenous Australian membership of professional bodies and
 - iv. Encouraging Indigenous Australians 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. [Western Sydney University Indigenous Strategy 2020 - 2025](#)
- b. Commonwealth [Department of Education, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy](#)
- c. The University [Western Sydney University's Reconciliation Statement](#)

- d. Universities Australia, [National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities](#)
- e. [Closing the Gap, Australian National Report on Schooling, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage](#)
- f. [United Nations, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2008](#)
- g. [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

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Unit Head	Michelle Trudgett Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Indigenous Leadership 96838119
Author	Michelle Trudgett Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Indigenous Leadership 96838119
Enquiries Contact	Michelle Trudgett Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Indigenous Leadership 96838119

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Program" - A program of study consisting of at least four subjects or 40 credit points leading to an award of the University (Foundation Studies Program, Undergraduate Preparation Program, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Undergraduate Certificate, Associate Degree, Bachelor Degree, Bachelor Honours Degree, Graduate Certificate, Postgraduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters by Coursework Degree) which when successfully completed is conferred on the graduand by the Board of Trustees.