

# UA Indigenous Employment Guidelines

## 1. Motivation for the UA Indigenous Procurement and Employment Guidelines

Universities are committed to reconciliation and Indigenous advancement in line with Universities Australia's Indigenous Strategy which makes a strong commitment to fairness and social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Australian universities remain committed to ensuring a true partnership between universities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities both within and outside the university as essential to delivering the best outcomes.

The Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-25 seeks "in partnership with Indigenous university leaders — to move beyond aspiration to implementation, ensuring that commitment to principles translates consistently into concrete actions and outcomes. This requires a sharper focus on universities' commitment and responsibility, both at an institutional level and across the sector, to ensure those responsible are delivering on the commitments, and that indicators and evidence show how they deliver and whether they have reached their goals".

## 2. Guiding Principles

These Guiding Principles serve as a foundation for both the UA Indigenous Procurement and Employment Guidelines and aim to support Indigenous self-determination and the evolving needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities.

- Respect for Indigenous cultures and traditional knowledge
- Prioritisation of Indigenous voices and decision-making processes
- Commitment to creating a culturally safe workplace
- Commitment to cultural governance by Indigenous leaders
- Commitment to creating long-term, not just transactional, relationships
- Recognition and incorporation of local contexts
- Commitment to continuous learning through listening, reflection, gathering data, measuring outcomes, and improving
- Intention to mature Indigenous employment and procurement practices so they are embedded in everyday practices, policies, and procedures, moving away from 'initiatives'.

## 3. Introduction to the Indigenous Employment Guidelines

As part of Universities Australia's (UA) Indigenous Strategy 2022–2025, the DVCs (Corporate) Committee (DVCC) has committed to developing Indigenous Employment Guidelines, drawing on successful elements of strategies implemented across the sector. These guidelines aim to support Indigenous people's self-determination, working in mutuality with local Indigenous voices.

Approximately 1,700 Indigenous staff are currently employed across the Australian higher education sector, which represents 1.4% of the total workforce. Many Universities are aiming to lift Indigenous employment to align with the number of Indigenous people in the population.

The purpose of this document is to build on the success of Indigenous Employment initiatives currently being implemented within the Australian university sector and to propose practical employment guidelines to attract and grow Indigenous workforce and support the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. In addition, Universities Australia DVCC has the opportunity to identify shared focus areas, and to leverage our collective experiences and resources to progress these outcomes.

## 4. Indigenous Employment Guidelines

### Cultural Strategy

1. Observe cultural protocols.
2. Implement cultural professional development and practical resources.
3. Build inclusive leadership behaviours by shifting cultural safety and anti-racism accountability to team leader level.
4. Conduct internal pulse surveys to understand:
  - Do Indigenous employees feel culturally safe?
  - Do employees feel they understand the key elements of Indigenous history and culturally significant practices, and cultural safety is practiced within their workplace?



### Attraction

5. Through consultation with Indigenous employees gain an understanding of why Universities are attractive employers, and gain insights into areas for improvement.
6. Develop a sector wide, and local Indigenous Employee Value Proposition recognising demand for Indigenous talent from numerous sectors.
7. Consider creating a discrete budget for Indigenous recruitment and retention.
8. Incorporate non-traditional employment avenues through local partnerships such as Councils and TAFEs (Technical and Further Education institutions).
9. Create talent pipelines through
  - 'Students as Staff'
  - sessional employment
  - internships
  - graduate programs with permanent positions
  - talent pools
  - casual conversion, and
  - positions for industry practitioners to move into academic roles.
10. Build pathways to minimise barriers by offering Expressions of Interest which incorporate talent pooling, and Indigenous staff onboarding.
11. Redesign Indigenous attraction, recruitment and onboarding programs, increasing Indigenous representation on hiring panels, minimising unnecessary processes, increasing opportunities for familiarisation, and increasing hiring manager's cultural capability.

### Retention

12. Nurture active and vibrant internal Indigenous Networks providing professional support, advocacy, and consultation to enrich the Indigenous employment experience.
13. Build Indigenous led employee experience initiatives.
14. Consider Indigenous employment targets at a departmental level which include academic targets and give consideration to levels. This aims to increase Indigenous academic representation, organisational accountability and improve team diversity and cultural capability.
15. Offer personalised flexibility. This may take the form of workplace flexibility to work on Country or support family or community responsibilities.
16. Recognise, quantify, and compensate for cultural load in position descriptions and workload allocations.

### Development

17. Facilitate individual, employee focused career plans so employees can have input into performance targets and articulate their career goals and aspirations. Encourage supervisors to be both mentors and sponsors.
18. Establish sustainable pathways which enable Indigenous staff and academics to consolidate their skills and experiences and build their reputation as they prepare for more senior roles.
19. Work with other Universities and external agencies to develop secondment opportunities.
20. Provide sponsorship, career mentorship programs and networking opportunities.
21. Provide specific leadership development, time buy-out schemes and Achievement Relative to Opportunity programs as specific career opportunities arise.

### Accountability

22. Ensure Indigenous workforce data is available for managers for tracking outcomes and developing evidence-based decisions on information such as distribution of Indigenous employees, levels, locations, disciplines, tenure, trends in promotion, trends in stagnation, trends in attrition and Indigenous employees' perception of the employment experience.
23. Embed cultural safety and employment goals within performance planning frameworks.
24. Consider targets for Indigenous representation across the University and at senior and executive levels, with a focus on a growth in real numbers, not percentage representation.

## 5. Collective Benefit

Universities Australia may benefit from cementing a reputation for the higher education sector which is an 'Employer of Choice' for Indigenous peoples through leveraging collective knowledge and opportunities. Some areas in which UA members may wish to collaborate include:

- Sector wide Employee Value Proposition
- Career planning framework/tool
- Sector wide mentoring/fellowship program
- Sector wide 'hub' to promote secondment, professional development, and employment opportunities



## 6. Case Examples

It is recognised that best practice is when activities are standardised and embedded in general practice. The cases below are just some of the activities which have been successful within the university sector:

- Creating Early Career positions with clear, supported, and reliable longer-term career pathways.
- Upskilling program for all staff who supervise Indigenous HDR (Higher Degree Research) students.
- Clearly articulated and understood knowledge and practice regarding cultural safety is embedded at a team level i.e., Training, support materials, activities, etc.
- Indigenous Recruitment Guidelines which offices, faculties, and schools can use to guide their processes of identifying the need for Indigenous-identified roles along with marketing, recruitment, advertisement, interview, and appointment procedures.
- Centrally located, written resources to support hiring managers and supervisors of Indigenous employees i.e., understanding appropriate interview questions, cultural leave, family responsibilities, cultural load, etc.
- Monthly Indigenous staff meeting for the purposes of networking, information sharing, and a platform for staff to voice concerns to senior staff in the University.
- Targets for ongoing employment and recruitment of Indigenous staff at specific levels of the University. e.g., Number of Indigenous professoriates, each STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) faculty to employ at least 1 new career academic and 2 cadets.
- The Indigenous Graduate Program. Focuses on building Indigenous skills and talent to meet university specific needs. Two (2) year Graduate Program provides an opportunity for 4 rotations tailored to the Graduates area of expertise and background. It offered a formal induction, cultural immersion opportunities, personal development such as self-reflection sessions and participation in workshops for goal setting attendance at conferences for professional development and industry networking.
- Sessional Academic Pathways, teaching into Indigenous Courses, understand and participate in team-teaching, be comfortable with content and pedagogy.
- Academic Promotions Review which includes acknowledgement of Indigenous Academic staff and the added value their cultural knowledge and lived experience contributes to their role. This allows for Indigenous Academic staff to experience a culturally safe promotions process with the inclusion of Senior Indigenous Academic and Community on promotion panels if the staff member chooses.
- Structured mentoring of all Indigenous staff with support from Human Resources and culturally safe Alumni members, building on mentoring frameworks such as the NATSIHEC model.
- Students as Staff Program, students to undertake tasks such as administration, mentors, research assistants, and or academic assistants based in Learning Hubs with Libraries. The initiative allows them to be a more competitive candidate on completion of their studies.