The University of Melbourne

Indigenous Student Plan 2020-2022
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Background
The University’s commitment to equitable tertiary participation for Indigenous Australians has seen continued success since 2011 with Indigenous student numbers rising yearly.

In 2015, the University set population parity in its sights, aiming for Indigenous students to be represented in the student cohort in the same proportion as their representation in the Australian population. Beginning from a modest base, and recognising the ambitious nature of this challenge, the goal was long-term and the Indigenous Student Plan of 2013-2018 (extended through 2019) focused on attracting the best and brightest Indigenous students to study a diverse range of disciplines. With strong recruitment efforts largely through the Murrup Barak Melbourne Institute of Indigenous Development (Murrup Barak) and strategic investment in Indigenous recruitment activities, the University is on-track to meet its target.

For this Indigenous Student Plan and those to come, the University aims to not only to sustain its Indigenous student cohort growth but to place a deliberate focus on the structural, cultural and environmental factors which will enable Indigenous people, through a Melbourne education, to thrive. This involves focusing on the deep engagement of our students in careers, articulation into further academic pathways, lifelong learning and continued academic engagement. The success of our Indigenous students is realised not only in their degree attainment, but in making full use of the advantages of education including wider opportunity, greater social mobility and the impact this has on not only the student but also community, society and the Australian workforce.
Vision

Whilst actions to redress inequality are important, they are merely basic first steps in unlocking the potential of our Indigenous population. To realise the vision of a flourishing Australian society where Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are unified and thriving, we must model this in the life of our institution.

This Indigenous Student Plan introduces the University’s next milestone target, 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by 2029. This cohort will be strong in both numbers and presence, enriching our social and cultural fabric. The responsibility of the University is therefore not only to support the success of these 1000 students through their studies, but to prepare 1000 graduates to join the Indigenous workforce of the future, woven deeply into all disciplines of professional life, from health to politics, engineering to performing arts.

Targets

- a 1000-strong Indigenous student body by 2029
- an undergraduate to graduate student ratio to be equal for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students by 2025.
- success rates for Indigenous students as for the general student cohort, that is, a student success ratio of 1.0 at undergraduate and graduate coursework levels.

Goals

To achieve parity in educational outcomes for Indigenous students by:

- Recruiting Indigenous students with the potential to succeed in University education and developing educational innovation and alternative pathways that create the opportunities to realise this aspiration.
- Providing Indigenous students with a high-quality educational experience that nurtures excellence and personal achievement.
- Creating a culturally safe, learning environment for Indigenous students.
- Enabling an enriching and transformative University experience for Indigenous students who also have a significant contribution to make to University life.
- Realising the capabilities of Indigenous Australians to have a transformative impact on Australian society and Indigenous development.
**Approach**

The University’s approach to Indigenous affairs is guided by our Reconciliation Action Plan April 2018 – December 2022 (RAP 3), which details 14 Signature Projects aimed to have a transformational impact for Reconciliation both within and well beyond the University. RAP 3 examines the complex environment of reconciliation and proposes sophisticated projects which demonstrate the University’s commitment to investing in reconciliation deeply and holistically.

RAP 3 provides a foundation for the University to 2022, with a review to take place in 2020. In parallel to this, as the University’s primary guiding strategy Growing Esteem 2015-2020 comes to an end and the next University strategy is being developed, this Indigenous Student Plan 2020-2022 aligns itself to the strategy planning cycle allowing for review once the Strategy2030 is set and organisational structures and responsibilities consolidate.

However, the hierarchy of strategy and frameworks for Indigenous planning remain clear. RAP 3 is supported by three University-level strategic plans: the Indigenous Employment Framework, the Indigenous Research Framework and the Indigenous Student Plan, each of which intersect with and complement our reconciliation goals and detail further strategies to advance the Indigenous agenda in the core business areas of teaching and learning, research, and as an employer.

From these, responsibilities and actions at the local-level are encapsulated in Divisional Indigenous Development Plans (DIDPs). In academic divisions, this includes details of student recruitment plans, employment of Indigenous academic and professional staff and approaches to incorporating Indigenous knowledge into teaching, learning and research. In Chancellery, the DIDP details responsibilities for Indigenous student strategy, such as co-creation of a new student precinct which celebrates Indigenous cultures and the development of an Indigenous Knowledge Institute, as well as detailed approaches to Indigenous student support, scholarships and other university-wide services.

As such, this Indigenous Student Plan describes the University’s vision and ambitions for its current and future Indigenous student cohort and outlines focus areas and high-level strategies which guide the direction and plans of divisions within the University. The Plan is framed as strategies within three focus areas: Outreach and Recruitment; the Student Experience; and Graduate Pathways and Careers.

In a context where we are constantly evaluating the quality of the student experience and the meaning and value of student engagement to individuals, cohorts and the institution, the strategies focus on initiatives and approaches which complement and enhance existing and developing programs and initiatives for the wider cohort. Through its identification of priority areas, the Plan also describes new work in the Indigenous student space which may serve as a model for expansion to the wider student body.
Focus Area 1: Outreach and Recruitment

The University continues to work towards the challenge of achieving population parity by 2050, with a new 10-year goal of growing a 1000-strong Indigenous student body by 2029. The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ 2016 census showed that Indigenous Australians comprised 3.3% of the Australian population, far above previous projections. The shifting nature of this goalpost is what makes our challenge long-term.

As scale increases and we begin to maximise our student enrolments from our existing Indigenous recruitment areas through the work of Murrup Barak and the Wilin Centre, we must identify new markets in which to promote the University of Melbourne as an educational destination. Three primary avenues exist for this at the undergraduate level: investing in strategically-chosen new markets where the Indigenous high school population is high or growing; increasing targeted efforts to recruit Indigenous students in our existing general secondary school markets; and partnering with and investing in Indigenous organisations working on aspiration-building in secondary schools both in Victoria and interstate. Approaching new markets holds great opportunity, but always requires start-up time in relationship-building with community and carries risk. Tapping into existing markets benefits from a University-wide collaborative approach to recruitment and, as Victoria is home to a low proportion of Australia’s Indigenous population, promises fewer enrolments. Forming new partnerships with existing high school aspiration-building programs holds the highest promise but requires dedicated investment of time and resources. Each approach is needed, and each requires thoughtful investment and efficient use of our marketing resources, University-wide.

Strategy 1: Strengthen and enhance Indigenous recruitment

A number of opportunities exist to build on and enhance our success in the Indigenous student recruitment space, from renewing and refreshing marketing approaches and creating plans and targets in priority areas such as higher degree coursework programs. This will be strongly facilitated by consolidating our recruitment efforts across the University in both the Indigenous and general domestic spaces.

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<tr>
<th>Strategy 1.1: Develop new marketing approaches to recruit Indigenous undergraduates</th>
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<td>An Indigenous-focused marketing approach to our undergraduate programs will enhance our efforts in Indigenous student recruitment, particularly by highlighting and showcasing the value and pathways from each degree for Indigenous students.</td>
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<th>Strategy 1.2: Focus recruitment efforts in new markets, based on Indigenous population density</th>
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<td>Recruitment efforts focused on Victoria and on our existing partnerships with Indigenous communities continues to provide a solid foundation for enrolling Indigenous students. Over recent years, the University’s interstate recruitment footprint has grown, capturing growing numbers of interstate applications.</td>
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With a limited Indigenous student population based in Victoria (7.4%), strategic outreach to high-achieving interstate students and relationship-building with potential feeder schools in New South Wales and Queensland (where the bulk—33.3% and 28.7%—of the Indigenous population resides) will continue to be a key strategy over the next decade. This will require a strong Melbourne Offer which can be clearly and concisely communicated to attract students to Melbourne over local competitors.

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<th>Strategy 1.3: Develop whole-of-University and Academic Division-based plans for HDCW Indigenous recruitment including targets</th>
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Recruitment of HDCW students has traditionally been the responsibility of academic divisions with mixed levels of experience and resourcing for Indigenous student recruitment. The success of the University’s Indigenous undergraduate recruitment strategy, which sees Murrup Barak working in partnership with National Admissions and Academic Divisions, and the success of the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development and the Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health in recruiting Indigenous graduate students into their programs, demonstrates the effectiveness of engaging specialist Indigenous staff in recruitment efforts.

A centralised, whole-of-University approach to Indigenous HDCW recruitment including engagement of specialist Indigenous staff, alongside the establishment of recruitment plans and targets in Academic Divisional Indigenous Development Plans will support growing our Indigenous HDCW cohort across all discipline areas.
Focus Area 2: Student Life
Student life is complex and multi-faceted, and the subject of much consideration as the needs of our students and the role of the University in students’ lives evolve. This Indigenous Student Plan identifies priority aspects of student life for the Indigenous student cohort. There is natural overlap between the Indigenous student experience and the wider student experience, but some concerted efforts in key areas will have a great impact for our current and future Indigenous students. These areas are:

- Indigenous student support, including scholarships, accommodation, individual support and approaches to maximise completion
- Indigenous student networking and mentoring experiences.

Strategy 2: Articulate the Melbourne Offer for Indigenous students
A clear and attractive Melbourne Offer at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels provides prospective students with a sense of student life and forms the basis for recruitment. The Melbourne Offer for Indigenous students encompasses the whole student lifecycle, and there are a number of strategies which will ensure that our Offer is complete. These range from making it easier for Indigenous students to come to the University and to Melbourne, to working on what is needed to provide Indigenous students with a culturally relevant, supported, enriching and valuable educational experience with clear pathways and options post-study. The key elements of the Melbourne Offer for Indigenous Students and achieving 1000 Indigenous student enrolments by 2029 are depicted in Figure 1.

The Melbourne Offer for Indigenous Students

Figure 1 Key elements of the Melbourne Offer for Indigenous Students and achieving 1000 enrolments by 2029.
### Strategy 2.1: Provide accommodation options for students who need them

The majority of the University’s Indigenous students reside outside the Melbourne metropolitan area, with 50% of 2019 commencing students from interstate. As such, one of the greatest barriers for these students is the practicality of moving away from home and living in Melbourne. To assist with this issue, a Melbourne Offer for Indigenous students must seek to remove this barrier by providing a clear outline of accommodation options that are culturally safe and provide a valuable cohort experience.

### Strategy 2.2: Review and refine scholarship models

Currently Melbourne Access scholarships of $5000 per year are granted to every Indigenous student who accepts an undergraduate offer, and eligible students are considered for further scholarships to support education and accommodation costs. However, not all students are eligible for Melbourne Access Scholarships, for example, non-school leavers. Additionally, there are low Indigenous application rates for Graduate Access Scholarships. Regular analysis, review and refinement of scholarship models, awards and application rates will ensure our students are supported to succeed.

### Strategy 2.3: Develop and implement an individual student support model

Individual student support through a key team of Indigenous student success facilitators, is a promising high-touch approach for the achievement of our student success ambitions. The University will develop a model that can deliver individual student support to best assist our Indigenous students. This will include cultural support, which may be resource-intensive and scaled as required over time. Importantly, to ensure stability of the student support staff and teams, these must secure ongoing resourcing rather than being reliant on external funding sources.

### Strategy 3: Cultivate a relevant and enriching Indigenous student curricular and co-curricular environment

A number of actions and strategies, many of which are described through ambitions in RAP 3, will contribute to a relevant and enriching environment for our Indigenous students and our whole student and staff cohort. These include:

- Providing a co-ordinated, cohesive Indigenous student experience through the Indigenous Academy (Signature Project 2.3)
- Investing in and creating relevant, student-centric spaces such as the New Student Precinct (Signature Project 2.2)
- Addressing place and Indigenous cultural recognition within the University’s built and landscape environments (Signature Project 2.1)

Building on these Signature Projects, this Indigenous Student Plan proposes further strategies to cultivate an environment for our Indigenous students to thrive.

### Strategy 3.1: Develop an enabling curriculum across all areas of study, embedding Indigenous knowledge into our teaching and learning practice
The embedding of Indigenous knowledge into teaching and learning practice at the University is a priority, and a Community of Practice has been established to explore approaches and best practice. A new centre, the Indigenous Knowledge Institute, will be a world leader and a gathering place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge in all its forms.

The Indigenous Knowledge Institute will promote interdisciplinary dialogues on Indigenous education and contribute to the Community of Practice on Indigenous teaching and learning. Importantly, it will have the expertise and networks to be a reference point to support the work of Academic Divisions as they engage with Indigenous knowledge in their educational and engagement programs. This will mean Indigenous knowledge will be delivered across the University’s teachings in a more sophisticated, cohesive and strategic way.

**Strategy 3.2: Develop effective mechanisms to maximise opportunity for global mobility and international experiences for our Indigenous cohort**

Indigenous International Engagement is identified as a theme in RAP 3 and articulates the University’s aim to increase the participation of our Indigenous students in meaningful international engagement experiences. This can include study abroad and exchange programs, or undertaking units of study with international field work, attending research conferences or colloquia. Mechanisms which support such overseas experiences include ensuring access to travel funding — a significant barrier to travel for Indigenous students; establishment of an Indigenous Student exchange program in partnership with international Universities; and increasing promotion of study abroad opportunities and application support.

**Strategy 4: Enable and support Indigenous student research**

**Strategy 4.1: Maintain and grow Indigenous Higher Degree Research familiarisation and recruitment programs**

PhD familiarisation programs for Indigenous students in Health and HASS-disciplines have grown in recent years and have been proven as a mechanism for encouraging articulation to PhDs. These will converge in the Indigenous Knowledge Institute.

The Indigenous Knowledge Institute will establish a doctoral academy and seek to attract national and international candidates to advanced studies and modules in, for example, Indigenous research data curation; Indigenous methodologies; and research ethics in community-based projects. The doctoral academy will also provide a strong point of connection for the University’s Indigenous Graduate Student Association, furthering national and international links. The experience of a critical mass of fellow graduate students working in related areas provides an opportunity for powerful peer learning and brings immeasurable benefits to graduate students.

**Strategy 4.2: Encourage participation of Indigenous students in research experiences**

A major objective of the Indigenous Knowledge Institute will be to build the next generation of Indigenous scholars and research leaders and provide mentorship to graduate students and early career researchers. The Institute will work with Indigenous leadership development programs across the University, such as the Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity, Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts
and Cultural Development, and the MURRA Indigenous Business Masterclass program, to support research-led mentoring of Indigenous students.

Focus Area 3: Graduate Pathways and Careers
The University’s Indigenous Employment Framework recognises the work needed to grow the numbers of Indigenous employees in academic and senior professional positions. The experiences of our Indigenous student cohort at the University play a significant part in their engagement in future career pathways and in building Australia’s future Indigenous workforce. This includes aspects such as:

- Indigenous student internship experiences and work integrated learning opportunities
- Articulation to graduate programs, i.e. the decision to remain in higher education for longer
- Recognising potential and nurturing our future Indigenous Academics

Strategy 5: Cultivate a strong sense of Indigenous cohort within and beyond the University.
Strong relationships with our Indigenous alumni hold much potential for our reconciliation ambitions and our ability to effect meaningful change and transformation. With respect to students, relationships with Indigenous alumni promise enhanced networking, mentoring opportunities and sharing of skills and expertise, employment opportunities and a strong sense of connection to, and engagement with, the academy.

Strategy 5.1: Enhance the University’s Indigenous Alumni Network
The University’s Indigenous alumni connections and information about our Indigenous graduates are presently based in local, divisional activities. Consolidating this information to form a University-wide picture of our Indigenous alumni will provide a better foundation for creating future connections and opportunities for new students and provide our alumni opportunities to maintain connection with the University as a whole.

Strategy 5.2: Co-create the new Student Precinct
The New Student Precinct is articulated within RAP 3 Signature Project 2.2 as a vibrant space for students to access social, cultural and community opportunities. It will pave the way for a greater recognition of Indigenous cultures and heritage as part of our infrastructure developments. The Indigenous student voice is a critical part in the co-creation of this space.

Strategy 6: Develop and consolidate experiential learning opportunities for Indigenous Students
The Melbourne Practice and Partnerships Framework (PPF) frames the importance of experiential learning to develop, consolidate and recognise employability skills gained within the curriculum of students’ degrees and provides a guide for the development and delivery of these opportunities within curricula at the University of Melbourne. Indigenous student engagement in experiential learning opportunities such as work integrated learning, is critical to developing the Indigenous workforce of the future.

Strategy 6.1: Develop and promote the Indigenous Internship Program
The University is experiencing a growing number of offers from industry to place Indigenous students in internships. In response to this and in recognising that the ease of access to internships for Indigenous students varies across courses and academic divisions, an Indigenous Internship Program has been proposed to increase
the number of Indigenous students undertaking internship experiences. Development and growth of this program will enhance opportunities and graduate pathways for our Indigenous students.

**Strategy 7: Promote and support articulation of Indigenous students to graduate programs**

Progression to Higher Degree Coursework (HDCW) programs is a key pathway for Melbourne students. This is reflected in high progression rates of undergraduate students to HDCW programs since 2012. HDCW programs provide a professional qualification and a specialist basis from which to build a career and are critical to our vision of a thriving Indigenous workforce.

In addition to HDCW program recruitment efforts, articulation of our current undergraduates to HDCW programs will enhance our Indigenous students’ career outcomes, as well as our Indigenous HDCW enrolments.

**Strategy 7.1: Provide comprehensive and tailored course advice for Indigenous students**

The University’s Advising and Mentoring framework comprises three elements

1) Academic Advising, which focuses on academic choices, providing personalised academic guidance to expand students’ understanding of curriculum choices and pathway options

2) Peer Mentoring, which focuses on social connection by connecting students with a peer mentor and peer group to support transition and navigation of the University, and

3) Industry and Alumni Mentoring, which focuses on career readiness, matching students with industry professionals to explore career and graduate study options.

Opportunities to promote and support articulation of Indigenous students into graduate programs must be well utilised and matters related to Indigenous student advising included in the advising and mentoring framework.