

People Strategy

2023–
2030



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses), the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses), and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.

Vision

In 2030, the University of Melbourne will be a destination of choice for talented people, who come together in a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive community. Individuals and teams will be inspired and supported to work in service of the University's purpose in education and research. We will have continued to innovate in how we work, attuned to our ever-evolving domestic and global context across its challenges and opportunities and increased our capacity to collaborate, explore, question and experiment to create excellence.

The future University community will seek and nurture talented staff from all backgrounds, and create environments of openness, inclusion, and dialogue. It will also value and recognise leadership, with a focus on building and contributing to a shared vision, reflecting our common aspirations. Our leaders will reflect the breadth of our community, be people centred and future focused.

Introduction

The University is its people. The key focus of the *People Strategy* is staff, and the culture of the University, as reflected in the relationships we sustain and the ways we work together with students and with others beyond the University.

As a community, we are dedicated to achieving the highest levels of excellence in education and research, and to the transformative impact of this mission for students and the wider communities we serve. In realising this mission, a diversity of views and lived experience are integral to success.

As an Australian university located on unceded land, we have obligations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Alongside these obligations are opportunities. The University aspires to be a national and global leader in creating and sustaining a culture of Indigenous academic excellence through transformative educational experience; celebrating, valuing, and protecting Indigenous knowledge traditions, and unlocking their potential to address the big challenges confronting humanity.

Advancing Melbourne 2030 articulates the University's ambition to build and nurture its community of academic and professional staff to serve our dual purpose of education and research. This *People Strategy* outlines how this ambition will be achieved, harnessing and leveraging *Murmuk Djerring*, the Indigenous Strategy, and the *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*. These three strategies are bedrock to a holistic focus on community and work together with the *Advancing Students and Education Strategy* which seeks to ensure that students thrive within our scholarly community.

The University is large, with over 70,000 students and approximately 12,500 staff. Our partners are many and varied and include (but are not limited to) industry, government, community organisations and alumni. Staff may work across sectors, and with other organisations, concurrent with their contribution to the University. In addition to staff, colleagues work with us as honorary appointees, independent contractors, suppliers and partners. Many individuals have multiple relationships with the University, sometimes simultaneously student, staff, and alumni.

Structurally, the University is distributed, with many sub-communities located within and across faculties, schools, departments and professional units. This distribution is physical too, across seven campuses and multiple other work sites across Australia and the world. Given this diversity and complexity, the aim of the *People Strategy* is to identify key priorities that will enhance and improve the experience of staff, while recognising the multiple communities we comprise.

This strategy has been built from two years of intense engagement with colleagues at all levels of the University, who contribute across the spectrum of roles. The priorities outlined here, across three focus areas, directly respond to the lived experience and aspirations of the University's staff, including those articulated in the 2023 Staff Experience Survey. The priorities reflect staff feedback, the strategic priorities set through *Advancing Melbourne 2030*, and are informed by research, as well as expert advice from within and beyond the academy.

As a community, we are proud of our success and excellence in research and education and our dedication to these twin purposes. We enjoy and expect collegial ways of working as we pursue these. Freedom of inquiry, opportunity for career advancement and flexibility are experienced and valued across our staff community, accompanied by a willingness and enthusiasm for innovation. In looking to the University we want to be in 2030, we will build on these strengths while acknowledging that different constituencies within our community have distinctive needs.

For this strategy to succeed, we must also commit, as a community, to shared ownership and responsibility for its success. Transparency and accountability will be a feature of its implementation, as will shared and distributed leadership of the activities outlined. As our context, requirements and opportunities evolve between now and 2030, sustained dialogue and engagement across our community will also be necessary.

This strategy marks the University's resolution to value and realise the potential of all staff, and continue to build a thriving, inclusive, and equitable workplace, united by our common purpose. There is much work to be done, and much that is already underway as part of ongoing innovation and renewal.



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Figure 1
The three focus areas of the *People Strategy*, and the commitments that will guide its implementation



A community designed to deliver our academic mission

Focus Area 1

Transformational education and excellence in research are the core purpose and academic mission of the University. Each of us contributes to these twin goals in myriad ways. As staff came together to discuss and inform the aspirations of this strategy, a recurring theme was the desire to articulate a shared set of values around which the community could unite.

Expressing this shared set of values will be a collaborative process between students and staff, and a priority. The values will be given both rhetorical and practical force by becoming embedded in policies and practices to guide how decisions are made at all levels of the University. They will lend refreshed clarity to the University's enduring purpose, reflected in how we will work together and support each other to deliver our academic mission.

Staff make diverse contributions to the mission of this University which must be valued equally by ensuring that all careers are structured to allow the development of expertise and leadership. This means imagining and adopting new ways to design and plan for work, and encouraging academic and professional partnerships that ensure the right mix of knowledge, skills and talents.

Transform our workforce

Designing for the University's future workforce requires careful consideration of the needs of our academic mission both today and tomorrow and reimagining roles and teams. Valuing and investing in people is key to driving this change, and ensuring that the creation of new roles reflects a commitment to better and more rewarding careers, to allow genuine opportunities for ongoing career development.

PRIORITIES

Develop a shared set of values and draw on these values to align policy, practice and behaviour.

Introduce comprehensive workforce planning across the organisation, that aligns with and supports our mission.

Prioritise rewarding careers within workforce planning and significantly reduce the use of casual employment, including through the creation of new continuing roles, while continuing to value the contribution made by casual staff.

Ensure our organisational design enables and supports our academic mission and builds resilience.

Support managers to effectively plan for future staffing and professional development needs in their teams.

Develop active succession planning processes to build continuity of strong leadership.

Enhance collaboration and evolve academic and professional roles

Forging new, agile, and collaborative ways of working across the University and with partners is critical to achieving our mission. Historic cultural divides between the two broad types of employment at the University must be overcome to create new dynamic partnerships between academic and professional staff. Both academic and professional roles will evolve in the coming years to enhance and strengthen the University community. Academic activities will model the many ways that education and research mutually enrich each other, and the expertise of professional staff will continue to play a critical role in the delivery of our mission.

The twin parts of the University's mission – education and research – coexist within academic work and should be recognised as a spectrum of activity across which all contribute and for which staff will be rewarded throughout their career. Following this principle, no continuing academic role should limit staff to focusing exclusively on one part of the University's academic mission.

PRIORITIES: FOR ACADEMIC ROLES

Define academic roles on a spectrum from education-focused to research-focused with no continuing roles exclusively one or the other.

Introduce new roles for graduate researchers that recognise their contributions as teaching and research staff and provide stability of employment during study.

Support purposeful planning to enable early-career academics to move between education and research activity as they develop their career.

Develop and support a flourishing education-focused staff community with support for professional development and with established metrics for recognition and promotion.

Continue to support a flourishing research-focused staff community that includes professional development, career progression, and established metrics for recognition.

Provide professional development support for academic staff through high-quality education and research-focused support centres.

Support and recognise the quality and impact of academic leadership and service at all levels.

Streamline and improve processes, administrative systems, and role design to ensure staff are supported in their roles and their time is appropriately used.

Professional roles span and enable the full breadth of our academic mission. An integrated professional development architecture will be developed to ensure our professional staff thrive at the University of Melbourne.

PRIORITIES: FOR PROFESSIONAL ROLES

Recognise and amplify the quality and impact of professional expertise and service at all levels.

Design roles and pathways to recognise, reward and retain the specialist expertise and skills that our professional staff bring and develop at the University.

Embed administrative system and process improvements to ensure staff are supported in their roles and their time is appropriately used.

Invest in professional development that focuses on building capabilities that support individual and team excellence as well as career growth.

Expand mentoring programs and improve opportunities for secondments in different work areas, to enhance career paths and build networks for professional staff across the organisation.

Improve the performance and development framework to better reflect the range of career paths.

Create a competitive program for entry-level professional staff to recruit talented individuals at the start of their higher education careers and support them with a tailored professional development offering.

Foster new, collaborative ways of working, harnessing technology

Vibrant campuses are at the heart of this University's community, where students and staff can meet and engage each other in the shared pursuit of knowledge. Digital platforms and technologies are also increasingly used to enhance and expand collaborations within the University and with partners both in Australia and overseas. In exploring opportunities for the transformation of work afforded to us by technology and artificial intelligence, the focus will be on how these may enable our academic mission and support the cohesion of the University community. The innovations afforded by these tools will allow increased flexibility to be offered to staff in many roles, improving equality of opportunity and connecting us in new ways, while also retaining the University's identity as a place-based community.

PRIORITIES

Embrace ongoing innovation in ways of working to attract and retain the most talented and capable staff.

Harness technology and innovation to support collaborative work practices and modernise interactions across teams, departments, faculties and physical locations, locally and globally.

Invest in physical and digital accessibility and inclusion on all campuses and through all digital infrastructure.

Adapt work practices to leverage artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies to create new ways of working within the University.

Ensure exemplary and resilient compliance processes and structures, which include clear accountabilities, are in place across the University.

Develop new specialist technical and administrative teams to support teaching delivery as outlined in the *Advancing Students and Education Strategy*.

Enhance and expand technical staff teams whose expertise drives our world-class research.

The University of Melbourne's enduring purpose is to benefit society through the transformative impact of education and research.

ADVANCING MELBOURNE 2030

A thriving, fair and diverse University

Focus Area 2

As an organisation and through the *Murruk Djerring* and *Diversity and Inclusion* strategies, the University is committed to developing a thriving, fair and diverse University community, working together respectfully to make a difference to each other and in the world. A diverse staff community enriches the University, bringing different knowledge, ways of thinking, a multiplicity of lived experience and new perspectives. This strengthens our academic mission, ensuring our transformative education and excellent research continues to serve communities by advancing knowledge, and creating a more just, fair, and inclusive society.

A number of actions are already underway to improve recruitment, promotion and support for staff in order to ensure the University attracts and retains the most talented people. Across the University, guided by our academic mission and shared values, all staff will continue to be supported to work with sensitivity and respect for others within our diverse community, harnessing our passion for learning to embrace new cultural understandings. As a community we are also committed to working together to ensure a safe and respectful workplace.

Increase diversity and embed equality of opportunity

In addition to the work underway through the action plans of the *Murmuk Djerring* and *Diversity and Inclusion* strategies, future work will focus on building an understanding of staff diversity and actively working to increase it across all levels and functions of the organisation, including within the University's leadership.

PRIORITIES

Increase the diversity of the University community and strengthen inclusion, as set out in the disability inclusion, LGBTIQ+ inclusion, gender equity and forthcoming anti-racism action plans.

Support and strengthen our commitment to Indigenous staff through the establishment of the Office for Indigenous Employment, with its focus on employment pathways and increased cultural safety.

Continue to evolve local and global recruitment approaches to ensure outstanding appointees, committed to our performance and behavioural expectations, are secured.

Continue to improve effective, respectful, people-centred complaints mechanisms, to deal with instances where behaviours fall short of expectations or requirements.

Improve data collection, analysis and reporting to better understand diversity, equity and inclusion at the University.

Amplify belonging and support staff to thrive

Realising the University's potential requires recruiting, retaining and supporting the contributions of uniquely talented staff, united in the achievement of a common academic mission in a way that is shaped by a shared set of values. It also requires that all staff feel a sense of belonging to the University, and are encouraged to engage actively to shape and guide our mission.

PRIORITIES

Ensure workplaces are safe, welcoming, and respectful.

Consolidate existing staff wellbeing programs with new initiatives to improve wellbeing for all staff.

Empower staff agency by developing new avenues for engagement and contribution to build collective ownership.

Build trust in the University's processes by ensuring that problems that may arise are addressed swiftly and transparently.



Next generation leadership

Focus Area 3

To succeed in our academic mission, we need leadership at all levels, distributed across the University and its many centres. Diverse leaders will be required to enable and support this success by co-creating a vision, engaging others with that vision, guiding workplace culture, and developing strategic approaches that lead us to achieve together what we might not have thought possible.

Excellence in academic and professional staff leadership must be reframed as both an aspiration and as critical to our mission. Leaders, whether already at the University or yet to join, must be supported in their roles and to develop the qualities that will result in mission-based, future-focused and people-centred leadership capabilities. They must also reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

Support leadership development for all staff

The University's leaders of the future will need to be adaptable, agile, and able to lead change in the service of the University and their community wherever they work across the organisation. They must be visionary, but also people-centred and empathetic, so that they may guide and develop individual and organisational performance. Leaders need to be systematically recruited and identified across the organisation and supported in their development of these qualities.

PRIORITIES

Build a practice of mentoring and leverage the extensive networks and experience across the University to better nurture emerging leaders.

Provide an integrated suite of leadership programs that support staff through the different levels of their careers, with a particular focus on creating an environment that fosters and welcomes diversity of lived experiences, styles and approaches.

Ensure all facets of leadership and leadership development are framed with a strong people focus and that leaders have the ability to lead through uncertainty, and a commitment to deep engagement.

Improve practices around giving and receiving feedback and embed regular feedback mechanisms to better foster continuous leadership development and build a culture of deeper engagement.

Ensure senior leaders are supported, stimulated, and challenged by outside perspectives on leadership, as well as internal insights.

Accountability

Progress in realising the *People Strategy* will be monitored using a range of metrics: both quantitative and qualitative. This will be integrated, as appropriate, with the monitoring of the *Murmuk Djerring* and *Diversity and Inclusion* strategies. Noting the dynamic nature of the *People Strategy*, a structured review will be undertaken in three years to monitor progress across the institution.

The priorities of this strategy will be tracked based on existing organisational metrics, including regular use of the Staff Experience Survey, first introduced in May 2023. A *People Strategy* Index will be developed from this survey to ensure that staff experience informs the measurement of these commitments and this will feed into the overall Advancing Melbourne Performance Framework for the University.

Regular dialogue and feedback loops will be expanded or established where necessary to ensure that our community has agency in shaping and contributing to the ambitions outlined in this strategy. This will require building excellent data systems and improved transparency of reporting.





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