

University of  
**Southern  
Queensland**

# First Nations Research Strategy

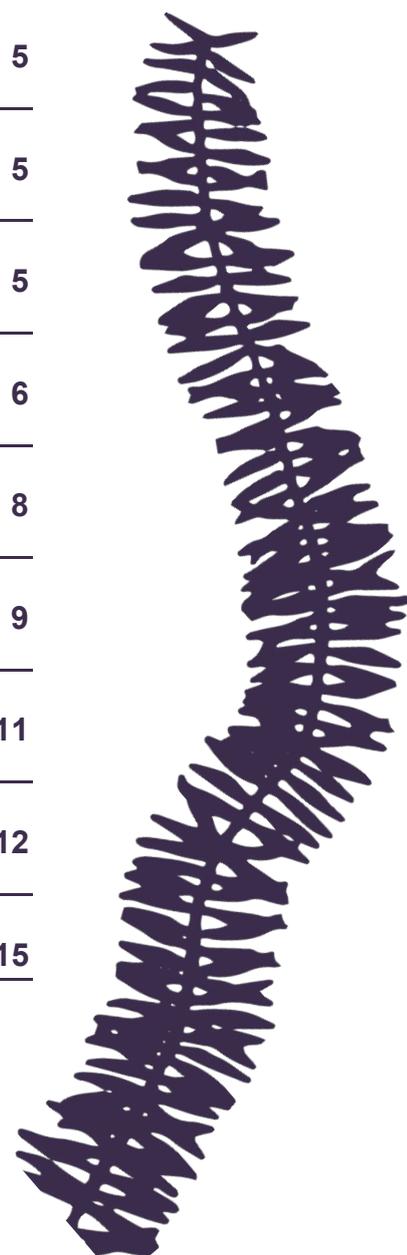
2024 - 2028





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# Introduction

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and honour the Giabal and Jarowair peoples of Toowoomba; the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul peoples of Springfield and Ipswich; the Turrbal and Jagera peoples of Brisbane, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, Sydney; the Bidjara people of Charleville, the Yamatji peoples of Geraldton, and the Kambuwal peoples of Stanthorpe as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways where the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) is located. Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past and present. We celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Australians and acknowledge the important role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian society. The University respects and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders, and visitors who come from many nations across Australia.

## Terminology and Definitions

In developing the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) First Nations Research strategy, UniSQ has sought to use culturally safe terminology and terms acceptable to First Nations communities. Please refer to the UniSQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols.

### First Nations:

Is a term which usually refers to Indigenous peoples. This term has a history of being used in Canada. In Australia, First Nations peoples are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who are the original inhabitants of Australia and acknowledges and respects the unique cultural, historical, and sovereign status of these Indigenous communities.

### First Nations Led Research:

Research that is led by First Nations peoples from conceptualisation, project design, gathering of research data, contribution of knowledge, data analysis and interpretation, communication of findings and translation or commercialisation of outcomes.

### Community Co-design:

A collaborative approach where First Nations communities actively co-design and participate alongside of researchers the research process. It ensures equitable power sharing, respects First Nations knowledge and fosters mutual learning to produce culturally safe and beneficial research.

### First Nations Knowledges:

The diverse and comprehensive (systems of) understanding, wisdom, practices, and teachings from First Nations peoples. This knowledge is rooted in the experiences, traditions, oral histories, and relationships of the First Nations peoples with their connection to Country, cultural practices, spirituality, language, storytelling, and ways of understanding the world that have been passed down through generations.

### Cultural Safety:

Refers to an approach that recognises and respects the cultural identity, values and perspectives of First Nations individuals and communities. It involves creating an environment free from discrimination and lateral violence where individuals feel safe, respected and understood in their cultural context. Cultural safety goes beyond cultural competence, emphasising power dynamics and privilege, and promoting self-reflection among all individuals.

### First Nations Methodologies:

Encompass the unique and culturally grounded approaches to research, inquiry and knowledge creation developed by First Nations peoples. These methodologies emphasise Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, rooted in cultural traditions, oral histories, and community-based perspectives. They often involve collaboration, reciprocity, and respect for cultural protocols, ensuring the ethical and respectful engagement of First Nations communities and individuals in research.

### First Nations Methods:

Refer to specific research techniques, practices and processes employed within the framework of First Nations methodologies. These methods integrate First Nations knowledge systems and cultural perspectives into the research design, data collection and analysis. First Nations methods may include storytelling, yarning, community-led participatory research and other culturally sensitive approaches that prioritise the voices and agency of First Nations individuals and communities.

### Mini Modules:

Is a process of earning and recognising small, specialised credentials or certifications that focus on acquiring specific skills, knowledge, or competencies in a particular area of study. In the context of the UniSQ First Nations Research Strategy, mini modules may involve the development and recognition of short, targeted learning modules and courses designed to enhance skills and understanding related to First Nations research methodologies, cultural safety or other relevant topics. Mini module provide a flexible and accessible way to acknowledge and build expertise in specific areas within the broader landscape of First Nations research.



***“We will shape a future where equity, inclusivity and the integration of First Nations perspectives support innovation and advancement, benefiting all communities.”***

## Opening Statements

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) First Nations Research Strategy embodies our commitment to ethical, culturally safe, and responsible research that enhances the lives of First Nations peoples. Crafted through the inclusive consultations across our University and with communities, this strategy honours the fortitude and strength of First Nations people and communities. The strategy acknowledges the historical trauma and inequities experienced by First Nations people, and advances on the principles of self-determination, to address social, cultural, environmental, and economic equity. It is important to note the implementation of this First Nations Research Strategy is a whole of UniSQ responsibility that will be championed by Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations Strategy and Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation.

This strategy will enhance the capacity of both First Nations and non-Indigenous researchers in an environment which supports culturally safe, co-designed research of the highest quality. Acknowledging, respecting, and celebrating the enduring knowledges and practices of the oldest living cultures on earth, this strategy guides us towards a respectful, strengths driven approach to culturally safe co-designed research. Recognising the historical misappropriation of First Nations knowledges and resources, this strategy aims to uphold the integrity of First Nations knowledges, fostering a landscape where the voices and contributions of First Nations peoples are rightfully acknowledged and respected. Through collaborative and culturally safe approaches, this initiative actively redresses the misappropriation of knowledges by fostering genuine partnerships, respecting traditional knowledge holders, and empowering communities. Moving ahead with community at the speed of trust, this strategy champions ethical research practices, ensuring equitable access to resources while nurturing an environment that honours and values First Nations wisdom.



Professor Odette Best  
Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations Strategy)



Professor John Bell  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)

# Our Commitment to First Nations Research Excellence

## Vision

UniSQ's First Nations Research Strategy will elevate First Nations voices and wisdom while fostering a culturally safe, responsive, and impactful research environment. We empower First Nations led research initiatives, forge authentic community partnerships, integrate traditional knowledges, and weave and inform across disciplines and foster a space that is culturally safe, where mutual respect and ethical practices thrive. In supporting both First Nations and non-Indigenous researchers, we will create a transformative research landscape that celebrates diversity, honours First Nations knowledge, addresses societal disparities and drives impactful change. As a pivotal component, this strategy aims to grow a critical mass of First Nations researchers through UniSQ's Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs and early career researcher (ECR) development. We will shape a future where equity, inclusivity and the integration of First Nations perspectives support innovation and advancement, benefiting all communities.

## UniSQ Strategic Alignment

The UniSQ First Nations Research Strategy 2024 – 2028 is aligned with the following [UniSQ documents](#):

- UniSQ First Nations Blueprint 2022 - 2025
- UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024 - 2025
- UniSQ Strategic Plan 2021 - 2025
- UniSQ Research Plan 2021 - 2025
- UniSQ Diversity and Inclusion Framework
- UniSQ First Nations Education Strategy 2024 - 2028



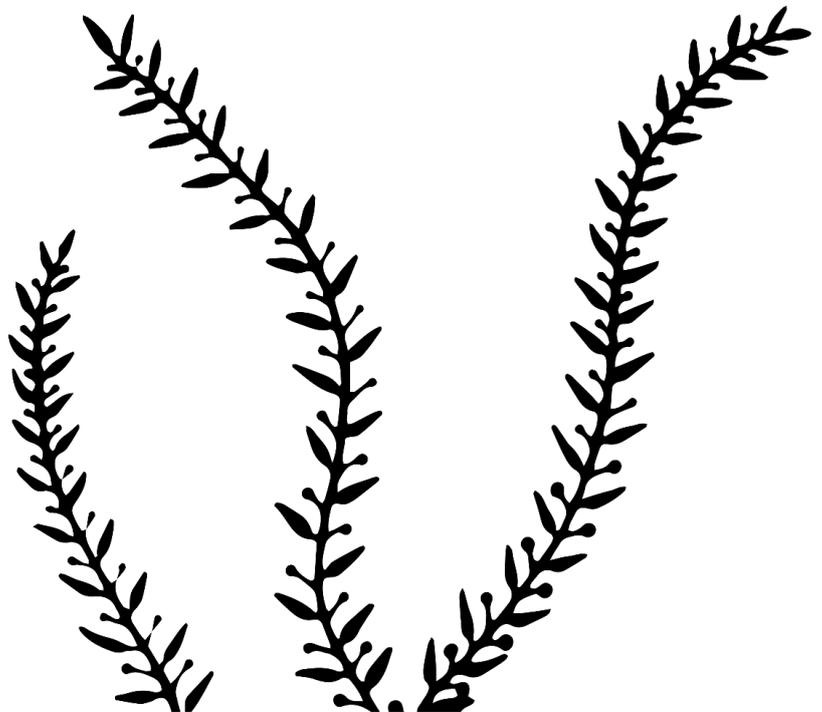
## Guiding Principles

The highest standards of rigour and ethics provide the foundation for the UniSQ First Nations Research strategy. The strategy is informed by the ethical research principles in the following documents:

- The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)
- The Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (2020)
- The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Ethical Guidelines for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2018)
- The Australian Code of Responsible Conduct for Research (2007)

The strategy is founded on an acknowledgement of traditional rights and interests to knowledges, lands and waterways as documented in:

- The Native Title Act 1993
- The Biodiscovery and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020
- The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2014)
- The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance (Australian Research Data Commons).
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003
- Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003





# **First Nations Research Pillars of Excellence**

# Our Pillars of Excellence

The UniSQ First Nations Research Strategy is founded on three interconnected pillars that foster inclusive, culturally safe, and respectful research practices and amplify First Nations voices within the academic landscape. These pillars, collectively focused on building capacity and capability of both First Nations and non-Indigenous researchers, fostering community partnerships, and cultivating informed culturally safe research environments, represent a comprehensive approach to honouring First Nations knowledge and advancing impactful research. The implementation of this First Nations Research Strategy is a whole of UniSQ responsibility that will be championed by Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations and Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation. Further this Strategy reflects and aligns with the Universities Australia's Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025.

The first pillar, Building Capacity of First Nations Researchers, focuses on elevating First Nations voices in research by promoting higher degree research through tailored pathways, developing ECRs, enhancing staff and community capacity for supervision, recruitment of high-performing First Nations researchers and celebrating First Nations led research achievements. Key actions include developing and facilitating HDR pathways, mini modules courses training in First Nations methodologies, masterclasses and promoting cross-disciplinary research opportunities.

Community as Partner, the second pillar, underscores the significance of authentic partnerships with First Nations communities. UniSQ seeks to undertake research with high relevance and impact to First Nations communities, fostering co-designed projects and reciprocal knowledge exchange. This pillar emphasises community-centred research priorities, design, dissemination, feedback mechanisms and active knowledge exchange platforms.

The third pillar, Building Culturally Safe Researchers, aims to equip UniSQ researchers with the necessary tools that enable an environment for culturally safe research. It emphasises alignment of institutional practices with established ethical guidelines and processes, integrating First Nations perspectives and First Nations knowledges across research, research training, and conducting masterclasses on First Nations research methodologies and methods.

UniSQ's commitment to ethical, inclusive, and impactful research practices is evident through its dedication to embracing First Nations knowledges, nurturing community partnerships and fostering a culturally safe research environment. The strategy emphasises transparency and accountability, underscored by a commitment to annual reporting on progress, and implementing this strategy. These reports will serve as a testament to UniSQ's dedication and commitment to fostering transparent and accountable practices.



“Through collaborative and culturally safe approaches, this initiative actively redresses the misappropriation of knowledges by fostering genuine partnerships, respecting traditional knowledge holders, and empowering communities.”

## Pillar One: Build Capacity of First Nations Researchers

Our Goal: Elevate First Nations voices in UniSQ research, focusing on identifying, mentoring, and supporting First Nations researchers.

OBJECTIVE	KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Promote Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) Pathways for First Nations People</b>	Increased Higher Degree by Research (HDR) enrolments and completions	HDR student enrolment and progression reporting	Trimester reporting from 2024	School Higher Degree by Research Coordinator and Dean (Graduate Research School)
		Identification and mentoring of First Nations students with GPA over 5 in coursework to research pathways	Annual reporting from 2024	School Higher Degree by Research Coordinator and PVC (First Nations Strategy)
		Encouraged conference attendance in discipline	Ongoing from 2024	Higher Degree by Research Supervisors
<b>Enhance Capacity of UniSQ Staff to Supervise First Nations Led Research</b>	Increased number of qualified HDR supervisors	Development and implementation of mandated mini modules course on First Nations methodologies and methods for all staff supervising First Nations HDR students undertaking First Nations research.	2024/2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy) and People Portfolio
		Schools to report on supervisors who have completed mandatory First Nations methodologies and methods research training	Annually from 2024	Associate Head of School (Research)
		Collate and publish online qualified supervisors and areas of expertise	Ongoing from 2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy)
<b>Enhance Capacity of Community Members</b>	Increased number First Nations community members co-supervising HDR students	Fee free masterclass for co-supervision for First Nations Community members	Ongoing from 2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy)

to Co-supervise Co-designed Research

## Pillar One: Build Capacity of First Nations Researchers - Continued

OBJECTIVE	KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Recruit, Retain and Promote High-Performing First Nations Researchers</b>	Increased number of high performing First Nations Researchers	Aligned with UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework	Ongoing from 2025	All of University
<b>Celebrate And Highlight First Nations Led Research at UniSQ</b>	Annual UniSQ First Nations research symposium	Successful organisation and attendance for the symposium.	Ongoing from 2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy), and Director (Office of Research)
		Effective Media partnership for research dissemination	Ongoing from 2024	Director (Media and Strategic Communications)
<b>Research Grant Support for First Nations Researchers</b>	Growth in grant submission numbers and success rates for First Nations Research	Identification of First Nations research grant opportunities	Ongoing from 2024	Director (Office of Research)
		Masterclasses and one-on-one support for First Nations Researchers in grant writing	Ongoing from 2025	Director (Office of Research) and PVC (First Nations Strategy)
<b>Scholarships for First Nations HDR Students</b>	Increase in First Nations HDR Scholarships at UniSQ	Commence philanthropic enterprise to create a First Nations HDR Scholarship fund.	Ongoing from 2025	PVC (Engagement) and Director (Development)

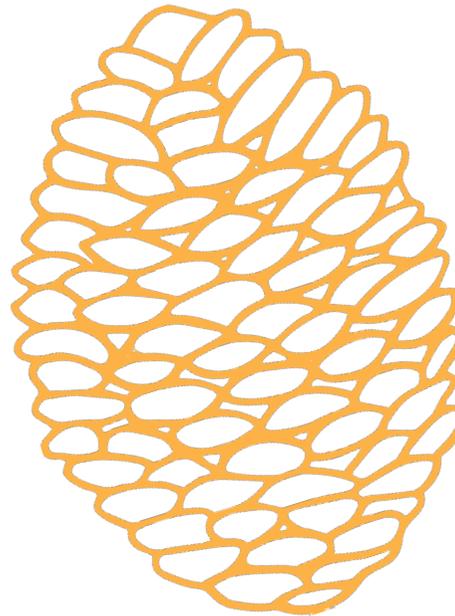
## Pillar Two: Community as Partner

Our Goal: Fostering authentic community partnerships to drive strategic research approach, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination.

OBJECTIVE	KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Build and Develop Community Partnerships</b>	Growth of authentic community networks	Host community engagement events	Each trimester, from 2024	First Nations College and All of University
	Community members assuming leadership and co-supervision roles in projects	Mentor research leadership and co-supervision capacity through community events and fee free mini modules	Ongoing from 2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy)
	Establish Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs)	Develop MOUs in collaboration with two First Nations communities to formalise research relationship	2025 - 2028	PVC (First Nations Strategy)
<b>Undertake Research of High Relevance and Impact for First Nations Communities</b>	Identification of key priorities for First Nations communities within the UniSQ footprint	Meet with Key First Nations Stakeholders.	Ongoing from 2024	PVC (First Nations Strategy)
	Increased number of co-designed projects with high relevance to First Nations communities across the UniSQ footprint	Facilitate conversations and feedback loop for First Nations community identified research priorities	Ongoing from 2026	PVC F(First Nations Strategy)

## Pillar Two: Community as Partner - Continued

OBJECTIVE	KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Community-Centred Research Findings Dissemination and Feedback Mechanism</b>	Successful dissemination of research outcomes in culturally tailored formats (e.g., storytelling, community meetings, visual presentations, yarning circles).	Provision of research findings in culturally tailored formats at the end of each research project	Ongoing from 2026	All of University research responsibility



## Pillar Three: Building Culturally Safe Researchers

Our Goal: Equip UniSQ non-First Nations researchers with the knowledge, tools and environment to undertake First Nations research in a culturally safe manner.

OBJECTIVE	KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Build Institutional Capacity and Knowledge to Undertake Culturally Safe Research</b>	Mandatory completion of mini module course on First Nations methodologies and methods for all researchers undertaking First Nations research projects	Develop a mini modules course on First Nations methodologies and methods	2024/2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy) and People Portfolio
		Addition of mandatory requirement in RISE system	Ongoing from 2025	Director (Office of Research)
	UniSQ research aligns with First Nations research priorities	Host community engagement event on research priorities	Annually from 2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy)
	Database of HDR supervisors	Build database researchers who have undertaken First Nations methodologies and methods.	Ongoing from 2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy)
	UniSQ protects Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)	Inclusion of IP policy suite that recognises and ensures protection of ICIP as well as shared benefits back to the community (Nagoya Protocols).	2025	Director (Office of Research)
		Masterclasses on Protection of ICIP and shared benefits	Ongoing from 2025	Director (Office of Research)



## Pillar Three: Building Culturally Safe Researchers - Continued

OBJECTIVE	KEY SUCCESS INDICATORS	ACTION	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>Build Institutional Capacity and Knowledge to Undertake Culturally Safe Research</b>	Enhance First Nations inclusion in research projects	Integrate First Nations individuals into the research team for all First Nations focused research initiatives.	Ongoing from 2025	PVC (First Nations Strategy), Director (Research Partnerships) and Director (Office of Research)
<b>Institutional Alignment with First Nations Research Ethical Guidelines</b>	Compliance with established ethical guidelines in First Nations research (outlined in Guiding Principles).	NHMRC annual compliance report and internal evaluation of First Nations research	Annually from 2025	Director (Office of Research)
	First Nations Research Alliance member representation on the UniSQ Human Research Ethics Committee	Identification and inclusion of First Nations Research Alliance member on Human Research Ethics Committee	Ongoing from 2024	Director (Office of Research)

# Alignment with wider First Nations initiatives and guidelines

The UniSQ First Nations Research Strategy 2024 – 2028 is guided and informed by the following external resources:

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (n.d.). Code of Ethics. AIATSIS. <https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/code-ethics>

Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR). (2021). *Good Practice Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Education* [www.acgr.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACGR-Guidelines-for-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Research-Education-August-2021.pdf](http://www.acgr.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ACGR-Guidelines-for-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Research-Education-August-2021.pdf)

Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA). (2020). *Review of Australia's Research Training System* <https://acola.org/research-training-system-review-saf13/>

*Biodiscovery and Other Legislation Amendment Act*. 2020. Queensland

*CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance* | ARDC. (2023, October 9). ARDC. <https://ardc.edu.au/resource/the-care-principles/>

*National Agreement on Closing the Gap* | *Closing the Gap*. (n.d). <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement>

National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2020). [www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement](http://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement)

*Native titles Act*. 1993. Commonwealth [Federal Register of Legislation - Native Title Act 1993](http://www.federalregister.gov/?title=Native+Title+Act+1993)

National Health and Medical Research Council (2018). Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders. [www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/resources/ethical-conduct-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-and-communities](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/resources/ethical-conduct-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-and-communities)

National Health and Medical Research Council (2007). *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018>

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. (n.d.). *About the Nagoya Protocol*. <https://www.cbd.int/abs/about/> Uluru Statement from the Heart <https://ulurustatement.org/>

State of Queensland (2023). Traditional Knowledge Guidelines. Using publicly accessible traditional knowledge. Biodiscovery Act 2004. [https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/333274/using-publicly-accessible-traditional-knowledge-guidelines.pdf](https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/333274/using-publicly-accessible-traditional-knowledge-guidelines.pdf)

United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* [www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html)

Universities Australia. (2011) *Indigenous Strategy and Guiding Principles for Developing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities* [www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Guiding-Principles-for-Developing-Indigenous-Cultural-Competency-in-Australian-Universities.pdf](http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Guiding-Principles-for-Developing-Indigenous-Cultural-Competency-in-Australian-Universities.pdf)

