



University of  
**Southern**  
**Queensland**

# **UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework**

2026-2030





## Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways where the University is located and recognises and respects that these places have long been, and continue to be places of knowledge exchange, sharing, wisdom, and philosophy for many tens of thousands of years. Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of First Nations Australians along with the important contributions they have and continue to make in Australian society, and pay our deepest respect to all Elders past and present.

UniSQ also recognises the ongoing impact that colonisation has had on First Nations peoples, families, and communities across Australia, and sees employment as a positive means of supporting self-determination, inclusion, equity, and healing across multiple generations while also promoting truth-telling, justice, and reconciliation within the institution.

Note: We recognise the terms 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous', however, to reflect the overall position

## Our Values

Guided by our core organisational values of respect, integrity and excellence, and in recognition of First Nations peoples deep sense of time, place, belonging, and purpose, the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) is committed to empowering First Nations peoples in taking their rightful place in our teaching, research, community engagement and enterprise.

We proudly embrace the living cultures of First Nations peoples, honouring and respecting their knowledges, histories, communities, languages, and cultures. We acknowledge and value the cultural responsibilities held by individuals and communities, and we strive to be recognised as a leading institution in First Nations teaching, learning, research, and engagement through responsive and respectful approaches to the evolving needs of First Nations communities.

## Purpose

UniSQ is committed to increasing the education, employment, and career development opportunities for all First Nations peoples. Through an active, University-wide approach to developing cultural safety for First Nations peoples, we aim to offer meaningful and purposeful employment opportunities and experiences that foster positive change, support career growth across all pathways, and contribute to self-determination and equity.

Our commitment is underpinned by and aligned with key national strategies, most notably the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025. The UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2026- 2030 is designed to support this national sector direction and also aligns with the University's strategic plans and other key plans, including the draft UniSQ Strategic Plan 2026-2030 and the UniSQ Blueprint for First Nations.

This UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework builds on the learnings and outcomes from the range of First Nations career and employment strategies and plans the University has adopted since 2006.

The UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2026-2030 aims to:

- support the goal of increasing First Nations employment and participation at all levels and in all organisational areas across the University;
- maximise career development opportunities to enhance First Nations knowledges, job security, skills, satisfaction, and economic empowerment; and
- support First Nations employees in shaping their own career goals and strategies aligned with their aspirations



## Guiding Principles

The UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2026-2030 is grounded in the following guiding principles:

- While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the two main cultural groups in Australia, this continent is and has always been home to more than 200–400 diverse Nations, each with their own distinct practices, processes, and protocols which have sustained them for over 65,000 years.
- First Nations peoples are the First Peoples of Australia and represent the world’s oldest continuing living cultures in the world.
- First Nations cultures, identities, heritages, languages, lore/law, custodianship, and social and spiritual systems practiced by diverse groups within First Nations society is respected and recognized across the University.
- First Nations knowledges are recognised as a significant contributor to all broader bodies of knowledge, and we acknowledge the scholarship, research, and expertise that these employees bring to the
- Participation of First Nations peoples in cultural, community and related activities enhances employee engagement and development and therefore provision for participation in cultural, ceremonial and community activities is of direct benefit to the University.

Underpinned by these guiding principles, the University is committed to:

- Fostering a workplace culture of mutual respect and understanding, with cultural safety and inclusion at the core of all operations.
- Deepening awareness of our shared history and supporting collective efforts to address past injustices.
- Strengthening employment and career development pathways for First Nations peoples—students, graduates, and employees—to increase representation across all areas and levels of the University. This includes meeting the baseline target of 3.6% First Nations employees established in the UniSQ Enterprise Agreement and working toward a growth goal aligned with the working-age First Nations population (4.5% as of 2023).
- Ensuring that First Nations employees are supported by university policies and procedures aimed at removing direct and structural racism across all work areas and the University as a whole.
- Actively embedding First Nations cultural heritage—including identities, languages, and social and spiritual systems—across the University.
- Allocating appropriate resources and funding to support the effective implementation of this Strategy, including investment in staff development and advancement.

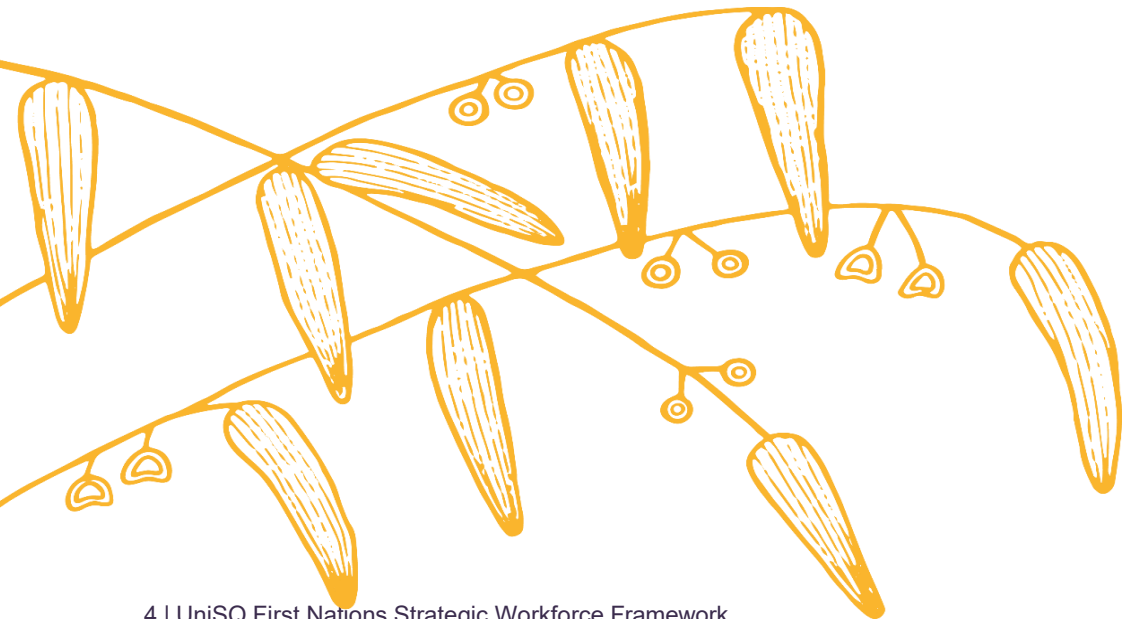
## Strategic Framework

The UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2026–2030 builds on the foundations of the 2024–2025 Strategic Framework, advancing its key objectives to attract, develop and sustain a high-quality cohort of First Nations academic, research, professional, and senior employees.

This is achieved through a coordinated, University-wide approach across six strategic focus areas:

1. **Governance and Accountability** – Embedding inclusive leadership and transparent reporting.
2. **Cultural Safety** – Creating environments where First Nations staff feel respected and empowered.
3. **Attraction and Recruitment** – Establishing culturally safe recruitment practices and pathways.
4. **Retention** – Ensuring long-term employment through culturally safe workplaces, inclusive leadership, recognition of cultural load, and support for career progression, mentoring, and wellbeing.
5. **Development** – Promoting career progression through mentoring, leadership, and recognition.
6. **Community** – Strengthening engagement and partnerships with First Nations communities.

Each area includes specific objectives, measures, and actions to ensure accountability and progress toward meaningful outcomes for First Nations peoples at UniSQ.



# 1. Governance and Accountability

UniSQ is committed to strong, transparent governance and shared accountability in delivering the First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework, ensuring culturally safe leadership, inclusive decision-making, and measurable outcomes that reflect the aspirations of First Nations peoples.

Objectives	Measures	Actions	Accountable Supported By
1.1 <b>Culturally Safe and Co-Designed Governance</b> Embed culturally safe, co-designed governance mechanisms.	Frequency and quality of formal consultation with First Nations staff.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish regular consultation through First Nations-led committees.</li> <li>2. Hold an annual all-First Nations staff consultation and planning day with culturally safe feedback loops and protocols.</li> </ol>	<b>PVC (First Nations)</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce)
1.2 <b>Inclusive and Representative Governance</b> Establish governance structures that reflect and include First Nations voices.	Number of First Nations representatives on executive and strategic committees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Form an overarching governance structure that includes a First Nations committee reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive, supported by other First Nations advisory groups, bodies or consultative forums.</li> <li>2. Embed First Nations representation in all key decision-making forums.</li> </ol>	<b>Vice-Chancellor Executive</b> PVC (First Nations)
1.3 <b>Transparent, Accountable and Responsive Reporting</b> Ensure governance processes are transparent, measurable, and responsive to First Nations communities.	Annual report card and dashboard published; community and staff feedback received.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and publish dashboards and annual report cards on the First Nations SharePoint page.</li> <li>2. Maintain and update SharePoint pages for First Nations staff and academics to support transparency and access to resources.</li> <li>3. Establish reporting mechanisms to First Nations communities and include Elders and Traditional Owners in oversight.</li> </ol>	<b>PVC (First Nations)</b> Chief People Officer/ Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)
1.4 <b>Empowered First Nations Leadership</b> Strengthen First Nations leadership and succession across the University.	Number of First Nations staff in leadership roles; participation in leadership programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invest in governance training, leadership development, and succession planning for First Nations staff.</li> <li>2. Benchmark governance practices against the UA Indigenous Strategy and other leading models.</li> </ol>	<b>Senior Leadership Group</b> PVC (First Nations)/ Chief People Officer

## 2.Cultural Safety

We are committed to creating culturally safe environments where First Nations staff feel respected, empowered, and valued. Cultural safety at UniSQ means embedding First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing into everyday practice, fostering genuine relationships, and ensuring that First Nations voices contribute to institutional culture and decision-making.

	Objectives	Measures	Actions	Accountable Supported By
2.1	<b>Embed Cultural Safety as a Core Value</b> Make cultural safety a foundational principle across all institutional levels.	Cultural safety integrated into performance and leadership KPI's, with mandatory onboarding and annual refresher training completed by all staff.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-design and deliver cultural safety training, working towards face-to-face and On Country.</li> <li>2. Integrate cultural safety into onboarding and leadership development.</li> </ol>	<b>Vice Chancellors Executives</b> PVC (First Nations)
2.2	<b>Demonstrate Leadership and Governance Accountability</b> Ensure cultural safety is visibly practiced and governed at all levels.	Cultural safety embedded in governance frameworks and leadership programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Embed cultural safety KPIs in leadership roles.</li> <li>2. Establish reporting mechanisms and involve Elders and Traditional Owners in oversight.</li> </ol>	<b>Senior Leadership Group</b> PVC (First Nations)/ Chief People Officer
2.3	<b>Recognise and Support Cultural Load</b> Formally acknowledge the cultural and colonial load carried by First Nations staff.	Inclusion of cultural load in WAMS, PPR, and promotion criteria.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect cultural service in workload and promotion frameworks.</li> <li>2. Update HR policies to recognise cultural contributions.</li> </ol>	<b>Vice Chancellors Executives</b> Chief People Officer
2.4	<b>Strengthen Culturally Safe Workplaces and Partnerships</b> Foster culturally safe environments and build strong relationships with First Nations communities.	Positive staff feedback on cultural safety and the establishment of long-term partnerships with First Nations organisations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-design workplace practices with First Nations staff.</li> <li>2. Develop and maintain partnerships with First Nations communities and Elders.</li> </ol>	<b>PVC (First Nations)</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)
2.5	<b>Build the expectation across all teams</b> Ensure Cultural Safety is understood, implemented and demonstrated in all teams.	Cultural safety goals are embedded in team performance plans; and programs and events promoting cultural inclusion are delivered annually.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrate cultural safety goals into performance planning frameworks.</li> <li>2. Facilitate programs, events, and activities that promote cultural inclusion for all employees.</li> </ol>	<b>Senior Leadership Group</b> PVC (First Nations)/ Chief People Officer

### 3. Attraction and Recruitment

UniSQ strives to be a nationally recognised First Nations *employer of choice* by prioritising person- centred strength-based approaches in all areas of First Nations attraction, recruitment, career- advancement, social and emotional wellbeing.

Objectives	Measures	Actions	Accountable Supported By
3.1 <b>Strengthen Culturally Safe Recruitment Strategies</b> Establish proactive, culturally safe recruitment practices that remove barriers and increase First Nations representation.	First Nations workforce baseline of 3.6%, with progress toward 4.5% parity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement targeted outreach through First Nations media and networks.</li> <li>2. Embed First Nations representation in recruitment panels and provide cultural safety training for hiring managers.</li> <li>3. Establish an automated First Nations Talent Pool to identify and engage potential candidates for future roles.</li> </ol>	<b>Chief People Officer</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)
3.2 <b>Build a Strong First Nations Employer Value Proposition (EVP)</b> Position UniSQ as an employer of choice for First Nations peoples.	Increase engagement with First Nations students, alumni, and communities by fostering career development, opportunities, inclusive organisational culture, and alignment with organisational values.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-design EVP with First Nations staff.</li> <li>2. Promote EVP through culturally relevant channels and community events.</li> </ol>	<b>First Nations Employees</b> PVC (First Nations)/ Chief People Officer
3.3 <b>Expand Career Pathways and Entry Points</b> Provide multiple supported pathways into employment for First Nations candidates.	Ongoing monitoring and reporting of the talent attraction and recruitment data pertaining to the First Nations workforce, including advertising initiatives, application data and assessing talent pools for Identified and non-Identified roles.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch initiatives such as “Students as Partners,” postdoctoral fellowships, internships, and casual employment opportunities.</li> <li>2. Establish a whole-of-University approach for First Nations employment targets across all career streams, levels, and functions.</li> </ol>	<b>DVC (Students and Education)</b> Chief People Officer
3.4 <b>Promote First Nations Leadership Development</b> Increase First Nations representation in leadership roles.	Number of First Nations staff in leadership positions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish mentoring and leadership development programs.</li> <li>2. Ensure First Nations representation on selection and promotion panels.</li> </ol>	<b>Chief People Officer</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)

## 4. Retention

We empower leaders, managers and supervisors to develop, model and promote culturally safe workplace practices and behaviours across all areas of the university, enrich the First Nations employment experience and support long-term retention.

Objectives	Measures	Actions	Accountable Supported By
4.1 <b>Demonstrate Inclusive and Culturally Safe Leadership</b> Empower leaders to actively support First Nations cultural safety and wellbeing.	Cultural safety is demonstrated through active leadership participation in training and ongoing feedback from First Nations staff.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver leadership development programs focused on cultural safety and inclusive management.</li> <li>2. Embed cultural safety expectations in leadership KPIs.</li> </ol>	<b>Vice-Chancellor Executive</b> Chief People Officer
4.2 <b>Recognise and Address Cultural Load</b> Ensure cultural load is acknowledged and supported in workload, performance, and promotion systems.	Cultural load is formally recognised through its inclusion in workload models, performance reviews, and promotion criteria, supported by regular review of workload allocations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Revise policies to reflect cultural load.</li> <li>2. Monitor and report on workload allocation and cultural leave usage.</li> </ol>	<b>Chief People Officer</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)
4.3 <b>Expand Career Pathways and Entry Points</b> Provide multiple supported pathways into employment for First Nations candidates.	Cultural visibility and belonging are strengthened through active participation in cultural events, engagement in First Nations staff networks, and uptake of ceremonial leave, while supporting the conversion of fixed term/casual roles to continuing positions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote cultural and ceremonial obligations through university-wide initiatives.</li> <li>2. Establish and support First Nations-led staff networks and mentoring programs.</li> <li>3. Implement the First Nations Academic Cultural Recognition Framework.</li> </ol>	PVC (First Nations)
4.4 <b>Promote First Nations Leadership Development</b> Increase First Nations representation in leadership roles.	Track trends in leadership participation and outcomes by delivering targeted First Nations Leadership Training programs and monitoring engagement, completion rates, and progression into leadership roles.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor retention trends.</li> <li>2. Develop and implement conversion pathways for fixed-term and casual staff.</li> </ol>	<b>Senior Leadership Group</b> Chief People Officer
4.5 <b>Increase Understanding to Strengthen Retention</b> Use insights gained from First Nations employees to identify factors that influence engagement, security, and long-term retention, and use this insight to inform workplace practices that decrease staff turnover.	Measure retention and turnover rates alongside evidence of culturally safe surveys, consultations, and feedback mechanisms that capture First Nations employees' views on engagement, security, and retention, and the extent to which these insights inform decision-making.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct regular culturally safe surveys and consultations focused on retention drivers and barriers.</li> <li>2. Analyse feedback and report findings to leadership with actionable recommendations.</li> </ol>	<b>First Nations employees/ PVC (First Nations)</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)

## 5. Development

We prioritise, implement, and embed innovative and structured ‘Grow Your Own’ approaches to career commencement, progression, and learning and development opportunities for First Nations staff.

Objectives	Measures	Actions	Accountable Supported By
5.1 <b>Support Self-Determined Career Planning</b> Leaders of First Nations employees feel empowered to have career conversations with First Nations employees.	First Nations employees with an active Career Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement culturally safe career planning tools and training for managers.</li> <li>2. Embed career conversations in performance and development processes.</li> </ol>	<b>Supervisors</b> Chief People Officer
5.2 <b>Develop Leadership and Executive Pathways</b> Increase First Nations representation in senior and executive roles.	Number of First Nations staff in leadership positions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish strategic workforce planning initiatives.</li> <li>2. Develop leadership development programs and succession planning for First Nations staff.</li> </ol>	<b>Senior Leadership Group</b> PVC (First Nations)
5.3 <b>Enhance Mentoring, Coaching and Peer Support</b> Strengthen professional development through culturally responsive support networks.	Levels of First Nations staff participation in mentoring, coaching programs and professional networks, supported by positive feedback on their impact.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch First Nations-led mentoring, coaching, and sponsorship programs.</li> <li>2. Promote peer networks and leadership shadowing opportunities.</li> </ol>	<b>Chief People Officer / PVC (First Nations)</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)
5.4 <b>Promote Access to Development and Recognition Opportunities</b> Increase visibility and recognition of First Nations staff achievements.	First Nations staff development is supported through active participation in scholarships, secondments, and professional development programs, with increased recognition through awards and achievements.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote internal and external development opportunities.</li> <li>2. Support applications for awards, grants, scholarships and leadership programs.</li> </ol>	<b>Chief People Officer / PVC (First Nations)</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)
5.5 <b>Deliver Tailored Professional Development Suites</b> Provide structured development programs for First Nations professional, academic, and research staff.	Monitor uptake and completion rates of development suites and gather feedback from participants to assess program effectiveness.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch Professional Development Suites for First Nations staff across professional, academic, and research streams.</li> <li>2. Promote access via First Nations SharePoint pages.</li> <li>3. Align Professional Development suite offerings with career planning and leadership pathways.</li> </ol>	<b>Chief People Officer / PVC (First Nations)</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)

## 6. Community

We are committed to increasing our overall First Nations community capacity, engagement, networking, research and participation through a range of opportunities designed to generate a culturally safe University environment.

Objectives	Measures	Actions	Accountable Supported By
6.1 <b>Strengthen Community Partnerships and Visibility</b> Increase UniSQ's profile and trust within First Nations communities.	Number of community partnerships and engagement activities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Host events with Traditional Custodians, Elders, schools, and organisations across UniSQ's footprint.</li> <li>2. Build reciprocal relationships through localised engagement.</li> </ol>	<b>PVC (First Nations)</b> First Nations Engagement Advisor/Officer
6.2 <b>Support Internal First Nations Networks</b> Foster vibrant, culturally safe spaces for connection, advocacy, and support.	Establish internal networks and gain feedback from First Nations staff.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish and support First Nations-led staff networks and regular forums for consultation and cultural connection.</li> <li>2. Measure staff participation rates and provide ongoing support for First Nations events.</li> </ol>	<b>PVC (First Nations)</b> Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy)
6.3 <b>Celebrate and Promote First Nations Contributions</b> Enhance visibility and recognition of First Nations staff and achievements.	Number of events, recognitions, and shared success stories.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote staff achievements through internal and external platforms.</li> <li>2. Create opportunities for storytelling and cultural celebration.</li> </ol>	<b>Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)</b> PVC (First Nations)
6.4 <b>Build Culturally Safe Research Partnerships</b> Position UniSQ as a trusted partner in community-led research.	Number of research collaborations with First Nations communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and implement culturally safe research protocols.</li> <li>2. Embed community-led research models and training.</li> </ol>	<b>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research)</b> PVC (First Nations)



## Conclusion

The University of Southern Queensland's goal through the First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2026–2030 is to recognise and retain the valuable contributions First Nations Australians bring to the workplace and society.

Through unified University-wide commitment and investment from all staff and leadership, UniSQ aims to create leading practice opportunities that support the development and advancement of First Nations peoples to take their rightful place in teaching, research, community engagement, and enterprise.

Achieving these outcomes depends on building authentic, transparent and enduring relationships with First Nations stakeholders—staff, students, communities, organisations, Elders, Traditional Custodians, and Country. UniSQ acknowledges the profound importance of these relationships and connections as fundamental touchstone to realising our shared goals.





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