QUT Indigenous Australian Employment Strategy

As a university, we recognise and value the significant contributions Indigenous Australian staff community make to our university community. They bring a wealth of cultural knowledge, expertise and perspectives into their various professional, research and teaching roles that greatly enrich the intellectual and cultural depth of our university and its community. This strategy sets out the university’s commitment to increasing employment and development opportunities for Indigenous Australians at QUT. It aligns with the Connections priority of ‘Recognising and fostering Indigenous Australian excellence’ by playing a critical role in creating necessary conditions within our university to enable Indigenous Australians to achieve excellence and success. We thank everyone for their contributions to the development of this strategy and look forward to working collaboratively across the whole university to realise its vision and outcomes.

Gillian Bromley
Vice-President (People) and Chief People officer

Angela Leitch
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Australians)

QUT acknowledges the Turrbal and Yugara, as the First Nations owners of the lands where QUT now stands. We pay respect to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning. QUT acknowledges the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within the QUT community.
Our vision
Supporting Indigenous Australian staff excellence and success.

Our goal
QUT is an attractive and culturally affirming employment destination for Indigenous Australians that supports and develops their personal and professional aspirations.

Focus areas
To achieve our goal, we will focus on:

**Workplace culture and environment**
Providing a culturally safe, inclusive and rewarding working environment in which Indigenous Australian staff can thrive, succeed and excel.

**Wellbeing and engagement**
Providing a culturally affirming, intellectually engaging place of connection for Indigenous Australian staff that promotes their wellbeing and engagement.

**Attraction and recruitment**
Increasing the representation of Indigenous Australian staff across all areas of the organisation, stages of the employee lifecycle and employment categories, with a particular focus on ‘growing our own’.

**Development and support**
Supporting Indigenous Australian staff to achieve success and excellence by developing their personal, career and leadership goals on their terms.

**Strategy and leadership**
Building organisational capability to support Indigenous Australian staff success and excellence by strengthening our policies, systems and governance structures.

Our outcomes
- Increased representation of Indigenous Australian staff.
- Culturally safe and inclusive workplace environments that is free from racism.
- Highly skilled and qualified Indigenous Australian staff.
- Improved Indigenous Australian employee engagement and experience.
- Culturally competent workforce and organisation.
Building on our successes

As a university, we are committed to the advancement of Indigenous Australians. Our commitment to Indigenous Australian staff is driven by the need to increase the representation of Indigenous Australians in all areas of university life, including through our shared values of education, research, engagement, culture and community. We strive to create an environment that is welcoming, supportive and inclusive for our Indigenous students, staff and researchers.

QUT Indigenous Australian Employment Strategy 2023–2025

OURL VISION

Supporting Indigenous Australian staff excellence and success

Our approach is guided by the following principles:

• Acknowledgement of the rights and responsibilities that flow from the 1992 referendum
• Employment as a key driver of Indigenous Australian engagement and success
• Providing appropriate recognition to the traditional custodians of the land
• Recognising the importance of the role of the university in supporting Indigenous Australian staff

We aim to increase the representation of Indigenous Australian staff in all areas of the university. This will be achieved through a range of strategies and initiatives, including:

• Increased focus on the recruitment and retention of Indigenous Australian staff
• Development of policies and practices that support Indigenous Australian staff
• Promotion of the value of Indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage

Our strategy is supported by a range of internal and external policies, programs and initiatives. These include:

• QUT’s HR People Strategy
• QUT’s Academic Plan
• QUT’s Indigenous Australian Academic Career (IAAC) Development and Support Strategy
• QUT’s Engagement with Indigenous Australian Employees

We will work to ensure that Indigenous Australian staff are supported in their careers, and that they have access to opportunities for professional development and advancement.

QUT’s vision is to be an employer of choice for Indigenous Australian staff. We will achieve this by:

• Increasing the representation of Indigenous Australian staff in all areas of the university
• Developing policies and practices that support Indigenous Australian staff
• Promoting the value of Indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage

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OUR APPROACH

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Building on our successes

QUT has made demonstrable progress in supporting Indigenous Australian staff success and excellence. Over the course of our previous Indigenous Australian Employment Strategy between 2018 to 2021 there have been many achievements and successes that provide a solid foundation for achieving our vision (refer Fact Sheet). Despite these achievements, we know there is much more for the university to do. Our new strategy seeks to learn from and build on these successes to continue our momentum.

Like many Australian universities, QUT is committed to increasing the representation of Indigenous Australians across our entire workforce. Our current number of Indigenous Australian staff employed at the university is the highest it has ever been in the thirty-year history of the university. A key challenge for the university is to sustain and build on this success. Over the last decade, our growth rate of Indigenous Australian staff has been highly variable. It suggests that our employment enablers must not only focus on attraction and recruitment but also staff wellbeing, engagement, retention and the creation of sustainable careers.

QUT aspires to be an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians. To promote Indigenous Australian employment at the university, we must position QUT as an attractive and culturally affirming employment destination. The university must work diligently and deliberately to create conditions that enable Indigenous Australian employees to grow, develop and thrive. We must provide safe, and comfortable work environments that is free from racism and exclusion. The university must also demonstrate through concrete, visible actions the high value we place on Indigenous Australian knowledge, cultures and histories through our education, research and engagement.

Several actions within the strategy are dedicated to increasing the representation of Indigenous Australian academics at QUT, especially in senior levels. Their recruitment and retention remain an ongoing challenge for QUT and a key focus area for improvement going forward. The low supply and high demand for Indigenous Australian academics Australia-wide makes their recruitment and retention extremely competitive. As a university, we must look at new and innovative ways to ‘grow our own’ Indigenous Australian academics through identifying and supporting the supply pool of future Indigenous Australian academics, creating clear and viable pathways; and provision of university-based financial and employment incentives.

QUT recognises that our efforts to increase employment and development opportunities for Indigenous Australians must be a whole-of-university responsibility. It must be led and championed by senior leaders and embedded within institutional systems, structures, strategies and accountabilities. It must also involve a focus on building the cultural capability of the organisation including our people, policies and systems.

“Universities need to employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and then work to support them to advance their careers.”

Universities Australia1

Key drivers

Our strategy is supported by a range of internal and external policies, strategies and initiatives that underpin, drive and authorise our approach and priorities. They include:

- Connections—QUT Strategy 2023–2027
- QUT’s Academic Plan
- QUT’s HR People Strategy
- QUT’s Indigenous Australian Research Strategy
- QUT Enterprise Agreements
- QUT’s Divisional Enabling Plans
- QUT’s Campus to Country Strategy
- Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022–2025
- UA Guiding Principles for Developing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities
- Indigenous Students Assistance Grant Guidelines
- Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People
Delivering our strategy

The Human Resources Department, led by the Vice-President (People) and Chief People Officer, in conjunction with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Australians) will oversee the implementation of this plan under the strategy sponsorship of the Vice-President (Administration) and University Registrar.

To achieve the outcomes of this strategy, the implementation of the strategy will involve a whole-of-university approach with shared commitment, responsibility and accountability and include stronger roles for university executive and management to deliver successful outcomes.

Human Resources and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Australians) will jointly develop a university-wide implementation plan as a tool to effectively coordinate activity and monitor and report on progress of actions contained in the strategy. The implementation plan will cover the five focus areas of the strategy and outline implementation arrangements for each action including key results and outcome, responsibility, and timelines.

QUT’s commitment to advancing employment and development of Indigenous Australians is strongly embedded within the university’s strategic framework which in turn, flows down through the university’s integrated planning framework within the Academic Plan, Divisional Enabling Plans and faculty plans.

At a university-wide level, QUT Council has endorsed the employment of Indigenous Australian staff as a key performance indicator for the university, with targets set at university, faculty and divisional levels. As part of corporate performance reporting, the university monitors its progress against this key performance indicator and prepares quarterly reports to various university committees.

The university’s Indigenous Australian Advisory Committee (IAAC) whose role is to advise on recruitment, retention, and support of Indigenous Australian staff, will monitor the implementation of the strategy. Indigenous Australian employment is presently a standing item for the IAAC where the Vice-President (Administration) and University Registrar (or nominee) reports on progressive Indigenous Australian workforce data and outcomes. As part of this standing item, an annual progress report on the implementation of the strategy will be provided by HR to IAAC and the University Executive to monitor the deliverables and priorities of the strategy. IAAC membership is also inclusive of representation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff committee that is established under the QUT Enterprise Agreement as well as Indigenous Australian non-government community representatives.

References

1Universities Australia, (2022) Indigenous Strategy 2022–25, Universities Australia, p.31