

The University of Melbourne

Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020-2024



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Overview

The *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020- 2024* aims to establish the University of Melbourne as a global leader in supporting the internationalisation of Indigenous research, student mobility, engagement and staff development. It will seek to overcome existing barriers to Indigenous staff and student participation in international experiences and encourage faculties to develop new initiatives to boost Indigenous staff and student international engagement. It also aims to encourage more Indigenous Australians to view the University as an institution of choice for study and employment.

The University of Melbourne's *Reconciliation Action Plan, April 2018 – December 2022 (RAP 3)*, identifies International Engagement as one of four key themes. One of the Signature Projects under this theme is to increase international opportunities and engagement for Indigenous staff and students at the University through the development and implementation of an Indigenous Internationalisation Plan.

This Plan will provide an ambitious framework to guide, support and grow international engagement activities and international opportunities for Indigenous staff and students. These activities and opportunities will expand across the breadth of the University's activities including research collaboration, student mobility, engagement activities and professional development opportunities.

The *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020 – 2024* will support the ongoing growth of the numbers of Indigenous students undertaking international mobility experiences and encourage the development of international experiences focusing on Indigenous issues and knowledge. It will foster connections to other Indigenous communities internationally as well as encourage the identification and recruitment of global Indigenous talent.

The *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020 – 2024* will benefit both our academic and professional staff. International engagement and exposure can provide a critical boost to professional development. Therefore, activities targeted at Indigenous staff will focus on providing academically and professionally rewarding experiences, and also assist in building a strong international network of Indigenous academic and professional staff peers.

The central aims of the *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020 - 2024* are to:

- establish the University of Melbourne as a leader in supporting international Indigenous research collaboration, partnerships and in the provision of international opportunities for Indigenous staff and students
- connect the University's international presence and partnerships with our commitment to Indigenous-related research, knowledge and cultural understanding
- ensure that all Indigenous students and staff at the University are able to access and fully benefit from the international partnerships and activities the University provides.

Indigenous internationalisation provides the opportunity for partnerships that facilitate knowledge exchange, understanding and collaboration between Indigenous Australians and First Nations peoples internationally. This will require a clear articulation of the importance of Indigenous knowledge and the strength of what is 'uniquely Australian'.

The University's identity and ethos are shaped by our sense of place. Our identity has been informed by Australia's unique place in the Asia Pacific region and the vibrant multiculturalism that defines the character of Melbourne. Our identity has also been shaped by the University's status as Melbourne's oldest university and an institution inextricably linked to the history and culture of our city. With respect to place, the University also recognises the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of the lands on which our campuses are located – the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people (Parkville, Southbank, Werribee and Burnley campuses), the Yorta Yorta people (Shepparton and Dookie campuses) and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus). Each has a unique history of continuous connection dating back more than 65,000 years.

Background and Context

Where we are now

Endorsed in 2018, *RAP 3* has articulated a number of Signature Projects through which the University will progress transformational reconciliation initiatives working with and for our Indigenous community. One of two Signature Projects under the International Engagement theme in *RAP 3* is to develop an Indigenous Internationalisation Plan. In addition to *RAP 3*, the University has developed a suite of University wide and Divisional level strategies, frameworks and plans aimed at increasing Indigenous student and staff participation at the University and strengthening career outcomes.

The Indigenous student and staff population at the University, while steadily growing, remains proportionally small. The University has set a target for Indigenous student numbers to reach 1000 by 2029 and Indigenous staff numbers to reach population parity by 2020. While Indigenous staff and student numbers have increased every year since the implementation of the University's first Reconciliation Action Plan in 2011, continuing to increase Indigenous student and staff numbers remains a central priority for the University. The *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020 – 2024* is focused on promoting international Indigenous collaboration and partnerships as well as increasing the number and breadth of international engagement and professional development opportunities for all Indigenous staff and students of the University.

The numbers of Indigenous students participating in international mobility and semester-based exchange programs has steadily increased. The percentage of the Indigenous undergraduate completing cohort in 2018 who had participated in an international experience was 41%, compared to the domestic student population participation rate of 24%. This reflects the measures that the University has implemented to increase our Indigenous undergraduate student mobility participation rates, including forming an Indigenous student exchange network with existing and new partners to increase visibility and support for exchange opportunities with institutions that have agreed to offer priority assistance with accommodation and access to local First-Nation centres and services. This network operates on a reciprocal basis, primarily for semester-based programs. Partner institutions in the network include: the University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, McGill University, University of Auckland, University of Otago, Hokkaido University, Oulu University, University of Minnesota and University of Washington.

Special student advising services have also been established by Global Learning and Murrup Barak, Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development to support Indigenous students participating in international education activities. In terms of research, the Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health is associated with a network of international Associate Centres, Departments and Institutes involved in Indigenous health research and student capacity development. The network includes the University of Auckland, the University of Hawaii, the University of Otago and the University of Umea. Additionally, we continue to develop new international experiences focussed on Indigenous issues. These include a mobility program titled 'First Nations in Dialogue' funded as part of the 2020 New Colombo Plan Mobility Program. This short-term program led by the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music will seek to facilitate ongoing cultural exchange between Australia and Taiwan focusing on the storytelling techniques of First Nations peoples through visual and performing arts. The program includes a four-day workshop run by the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Culture in Melbourne and a 14-day immersive collaboration with First Nations peoples in Taiwan.

The Barriers to Participation in International Opportunities

Proportional Indigenous student participation in outbound mobility experiences is currently at a rate well above that of broader student participation rates. However, to continue to maintain and further increase the participation of Indigenous students in international study experiences, the University needs to ensure that, where possible, we tailor or create study experiences and support programs that meet the needs of our Indigenous students. This Plan, therefore, seeks to address barriers which commonly prevent wider student participation in outbound mobility experiences and semester-based exchanges. Consultations with Faculties, Graduate Schools and Global Learning have identified a number of existing barriers to further growth in Indigenous participation in international collaboration and engagement. These include spending long periods of time away from Country and home communities; the lack of culturally safe spaces and support services at some

overseas institutions; individual financial constraints; and the challenges we face in ensuring a cohort experience for students in some academic divisions with small numbers of Indigenous students.

Our International Partners and Networks

The University maintains a strong network of University partners and is a member of a number of international education networks. These relationships are an asset to the University as they enable us to collaborate on cutting edge research, deliver innovative teaching and learning programs and provide our staff and students with unique international experiences.

Among our over 280 institutional partners, are a number of universities which share our commitment to Indigenous research, engagement and teaching and learning. Institutions such as the University of Toronto, the University of British Columbia and the University of Auckland have close connections to their local First Nations communities, provide support services to Indigenous students enrolled at their institution and have longstanding links with the University of Melbourne. While we have already close relationships with these institutions, there remains significant potential for increased collaboration to create new opportunities for our Indigenous staff and students.

The University is a member of leading international education networks such as the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), Universitas 21 and the Consortium for Advanced Studies Abroad (CASA). Through these networks the University is able to progress multi-partner research, teaching and learning, professional development and mobility initiatives which benefit our students, staff and more broadly, our region. These networks have also enabled the University to form closer relationships with fellow network partner universities.

While we are a well-established and highly regarded member of these networks and have credibility for having expertise and involvement in research and scholarship on Indigenous issues, we are yet to fully exercise our convening power in taking a leadership role in advancing collaboration on Indigenous-related topics within these networks. There is also a growing recognition of the importance of research on Indigenous-related topics and Indigenous knowledge systems, and the potential for these networks to play an important role in advancing international research collaboration in this space.

Currently, while our international networks have been beneficial to the University and our staff and students as a whole, there are a limited number of initiatives directly targeted toward Indigenous pedagogy and knowledge, students and staff. The ACU is currently the organisation with which we have the most substantial collaboration on Indigenous issues. There remains significant potential, particularly through APRU and CASA to develop new research and mobility projects which will directly benefit First Nations peoples both in Australia and internationally.

The Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity

The University of Melbourne's Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity (AFSE) program is one of seven globally interconnected Atlantic Fellows programs that collaborate across disciplines and borders to advance fairer, healthier and more inclusive societies. AFSE, funded through Atlantic Philanthropies, is an Indigenous-led lifelong, collaborative fellowship program which harnesses timeless Indigenous knowledge, ingenuity and creativity to bring a unique approach to transformative social change, particularly within Indigenous communities. The program selects Fellows who are proven changemakers with a commitment to and passion for effecting social change. Each Cohort is carefully selected to include a diverse mix of voices and experiences and includes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. The Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity Program is part of a global network of seven interconnected programs. The Atlantic Institute based at Oxford connects these programs and helps build a global community of Fellows who inspire positive change in their communities. The Atlantic Fellows global network and the individual impact each of the seven programs have, demonstrates the importance of utilising international networks to progress positive social change and to create influential networks of peers across the globe.

International Engagement

The *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020 - 2024* will use our international networks, platforms and connections to share Indigenous knowledge, culture, art and expertise with the world. We will deepen the global understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture and excellence through our global engagement agenda. We will also collaborate with other Indigenous and First Nations communities across the world to deepen mutual understanding and foster connections between global Indigenous communities.

The Art of Healing

An example of successful international engagement which does so is the Art of Healing exhibition. The Art of Healing celebrates 65,000 years of Indigenous healing practices through contemporary art. The exhibition presents examples of healing practice and bush medicine from distinct and varied Indigenous communities across Australia. The artworks tell stories of bush medicine from across the country as an entry point to a vast wealth of knowledge that precedes and parallels other great healing traditions across the world. In 2019, twenty works from the exhibition were gifted to Kings College London. In October, the exhibition opened at Charite – Universitätsmedizin in Berlin and will later travel to the University of Toronto.

The Art of Healing is a best practice example of the international engagement and demonstrates how internationalisation not only provides opportunities for Indigenous staff and students to study, collaborate and work overseas, but also celebrates the sharing of Indigenous knowledge, art and culture across the world.

Our vision: Where we aim to go

The University of Melbourne is committed to being a national leader in advancing meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous Australians. At the same time, we are global in our outlook and committed to internationalisation. This reflects our aspirations to ‘lead and convene, both locally and globally’.¹ We believe that the internationalisation of Indigenous research, teaching, engagement and staff opportunities is an integral component of the University’s broader reconciliation journey and agenda. It enables us to gain ‘strength and energy from being embedded in [our] place of origin, from deep time – remembered and inhabited through the knowledge and understanding of Indigenous people’², while simultaneously making a commitment to cultivate global knowledge partnerships. The *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020 – 2024* aims to ensure that the University is a global leader in fostering international research, professional development and engagement collaborations between Indigenous academic and professional staff.

We want to strengthen our partnerships with international universities who share our commitment to Indigenous knowledge and research and who have strong connections to their local Indigenous communities and peoples. We want to support our Indigenous staff and students to build a global network of peers with other Indigenous undergraduates, graduates, academic and professional staff members. We will encourage our regional and global education networks to prioritise and invest in Indigenous research. We will foster connections and engagement with other Indigenous peoples across the Asia-Pacific region. We will also build on existing successful international engagement activities, such as the Art of Healing, to proactively support international engagement which shares Indigenous art, knowledge, culture and excellence with the rest of the world.

Our Approach

Four Streams of Activity

This Plan will progress Indigenous internationalisation through four main streams of activity:

- Research collaboration and engagement
- International exchange and mobility
- International engagement activities (including cultural exchange)
- Professional opportunities and development (for both academic and professional staff)

These four streams encompass the main forms of international activity that will benefit our Indigenous staff and students. We will progress these streams of activity through the implementation of concrete initiatives and through utilising these key assets of the University:

- **Our international institutional partnerships**, specifically our partnerships with other institutions which have a close connection with their local First Nations peoples, a strong record of engagement with First Nations people and issues and well-developed support systems for First Nations students and staff at their institution.
- **Our international networks** through which we can progress initiatives that will not only benefit our Indigenous staff and students, but which will prioritise and advance research on the issues facing First Nations peoples across our region.

This Plan and the initiatives it details will support, work alongside and build upon existing programs and strategies implemented by the University to support our community of Indigenous staff and students both locally and globally. The plan will support Faculties and Graduate Schools to implement their own Indigenous internationalisation strategies by providing a whole of University framework for Indigenous internationalisation that will ‘advance reconciliation and reciprocal learning with Indigenous peoples and communities’.³

¹ Advancing Melbourne, p. 3.

² *ibid*, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, p.16.

How this will be achieved

The Indigenous Internationalisation Plan has six key objectives :

- Pursuing a range of agreements, partnerships and collaborations to promote international Indigenous research and to provide Indigenous graduate researchers at the University with international opportunities.
- Developing global mobility programs that focus on Indigenous issues and themes or which are specifically targeted at providing international opportunities for Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students to maintain and improve Indigenous student participation in global mobility schemes.
- Using our global convening power and membership in key international higher education organisations such as APRU, CASA, ACU and U21 to promote international collaboration on Indigenous knowledges.
- Developing and promoting international engagement initiatives showcasing Indigenous research, cultural and artistic expression.
- Establishing a commitment to the active recruitment and identification of global Indigenous talent.
- Supporting Indigenous professional and academic staff to undertake international professional development or research activities to advance their careers and the establishment of an international network of peers.

To achieve these goals and commitments, the *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020 – 2024* will be supported by a detailed implementation plan which will outline the steps required to achieve them by 2024.

Operationalising this Plan and ensuring its full implementation will be reliant on a coordinated, whole of institution effort. Chancellery International will play a central oversight role coordinating the implementation of this Plan and developing the international partnerships required to achieve its aims. The University will regularly monitor and measure implementation progress to ensure that commitments are met by the 2024 deadline.

Conclusion

The *Indigenous Internationalisation Plan 2020-2024* is one important component of the University's reconciliation agenda. This Plan will align with other key initiatives and will support the realisation of *RAP 3* 'to foster an environment in which the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their fellow Australians is characterised by a deep mutual respect, leading to positive change in our nation's culture and capacity'⁴.

The Plan will support our reconciliation aims by:

- Developing expanded international engagement and professional development opportunities for our Indigenous staff and students
- Facilitating the establishment of new international programs and subjects focussed on Indigenous-related topics or targeted towards Indigenous staff and student outcomes
- Committing the University to using its convening power in key international networks and alliances to support international collaboration on Indigenous research, teaching and engagement
- Curating whole of institution efforts to utilise existing partnerships with other universities who share our commitment to advancing the interests of the First Nations peoples to create new international partnerships and engagement opportunities for Indigenous staff and students.

International activity, engagement and exposure is an integral part of an enriching university experience. This Internationalisation Plan aims to ensure that these formative international experiences are as available, accessible and relevant to the needs of our Indigenous staff and students as they are to the wider student and staff body. It will support our Indigenous students and staff to build personal and professional networks of First Nations peers across the world. These networks will be invaluable not just to their careers and personal growth but will also further embed the University's commitment to celebrating Indigenous knowledge and knowledge-exchange and advance our reconciliation agenda. It will also help ensure that the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is heard within international networks and at universities across the world and inform global understanding of the world's oldest continuous living culture.

⁴ Page 5, *The University of Melbourne Reconciliation Action Plan, April 2018-December 2022*