

Indigenous Research Framework 2023–2027



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Acknowledgement

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 with and learn from Indigenous colleagues and partners every day.

About this framework

The University is home to exceptional Indigenous researchers across academic disciplines and has nurtured growing global Indigenous research networks that foster important collaborations. The University also acknowledges and benefits from the expertise of esteemed Indigenous Knowledge Holders and researchers in the organisations and communities with whom we partner.

The University strives to create a research culture and scholarly environment that supports Indigenous people's self-determination and values Indigenous histories, heritage, culture and knowledge as integral elements, along with our abiding goals of research excellence and meaningful contributions through discovery, research engagement and impact.

The diversity of Indigenous research and the plurality of worldviews among Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers is celebrated. However, it is also widely recognised that Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being have long been ignored and devalued across the academy and beyond (Luke et al. 2022). The Indigenous Research Framework 2023–2027 (the IRF) is underpinned by commitments to redress the consequences of such exclusions, to promote Indigenous recognition and inclusion, and to work towards better supporting and promoting Indigenous research and embedding a more holistic approach to Indigenising the academy (Hoskins & Jones 2022).

The Indigenous Research Framework is a component of [Murmuk Djerring](#), the University of Melbourne's Indigenous Strategy 2023–2027.

Purpose

The purpose of the Indigenous Research Framework is to set out the University's key priorities, focus areas and actions to support Indigenous researcher capability and advance the breadth, quality and impact of Indigenous scholarship.

The IRF, in parallel with [Murmuk Djerring](#), other institutional strategies and faculty Divisional Indigenous Development Plans (DIDPs), will enable the University to coordinate the implementation of ambitions and initiatives for advancing Indigenous research, knowledge, capability, leadership and impact as set out in the University's strategic plan, [Advancing Melbourne 2030](#).

The six focus areas of the IRF follow the key themes of the Discovery agenda in [Advancing Melbourne](#) and the priorities set out in [Murmuk Djerring](#). It complements previous research-focused strategic initiatives and signature projects. These include the Indigenous

Knowledge Institute, launched in 2020 to advance research and education in Indigenous knowledge systems, and the prior Indigenous Hallmark Research Initiative, a three-year multidisciplinary research hub that aimed to strengthen Indigenous research across the University.

Building on such work, the IRF looks ahead to identify directions and initiatives that will accelerate Indigenous research capability and impact and guide a coordinated implementation plan.

The IRF was developed with input from a specially convened Indigenous Research Framework Consultative Group, the Indigenous Strategy Reference Group as guided by the Traditional Owners Advisory Group, University academic and research committees, and other subject matter experts.

Governance and implementation

The IRF is jointly overseen by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability), as a delegate of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous). They will:

- develop and oversee a staged and coordinated implementation plan in conjunction with initiatives and programs linked to [Murmuk Djerring](#) and faculty DIDPs
- establish an evidence base to inform monitoring and evaluation of relevant initiatives and priorities under the IRF
- collaborate with other areas of the University and existing research support initiatives, such as the Office of Indigenous Employment and Development and the Researcher Development Unit, to further the goals of the IRF
- work with key research leadership forums across the University to build visibility, momentum and support for implementing the IRF's initiatives, including through the convening function of (among others): the Committee of Associate Deans (Research); the Committee of Associate Deans and Delegates (Indigenous); and the Committee of Graduate Research Associate Deans
- review progress and implementation against the Indigenous Research Framework annually and jointly report to the Indigenous Strategy Reference Group, University Executive and Council.

Definitions

Indigenous research

As defined by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), [Indigenous research](#) encompasses research that affects, or is of particular significance to, Indigenous people in Australia and internationally. This includes the planning, collection, analysis and dissemination of information or knowledge, in any format or medium, which concerns Indigenous people. It is conducted both by Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.

Indigenous knowledge

Indigenous knowledge, sometimes called traditional or local knowledge globally, refers to the understandings and practices developed by Indigenous peoples through thousands of years of experience. Indigenous knowledge systems are characteristically holistic, relational and rooted in a strong and continuing connection with the land, sky, waters and other species. Knowledge is often passed down orally and can be collectively owned. It can include or be embodied in language, song, story, ritual, law and customary practices.

As noted by the [Indigenous Knowledge Institute](#), 'the knowledge of Indigenous peoples does not represent a static body of traditional information, and the capacity to incorporate new tools and skills has always been fundamental to the dynamism of Indigenous cultures'.

Focus areas and initiatives

The Indigenous Research Framework is structured under six focus areas:

1 Research capability

2 Research quality

3 Research infrastructure

4 Research collaboration

5 Interdisciplinary research

6 Research translation and impact

Murmuk Djerring priorities (Indigenous Strategy)

Priority 1: Leadership

Priority 2: Place, Heritage and Culture

Priority 3: Partnerships

Priority 4: Indigenous Knowledge

Priority 5: Truth-telling and Justice

Discovery themes (Advancing Melbourne 2030)

Research capability

Research quality

Research infrastructure

Research collaboration

Interdisciplinary research

Research translation and impact

These will be integrated with the key 'Discovery' themes of [Advancing Melbourne 2030](#) and the five priorities of [Murmuk Djerring](#).

Focus Area 1: Research capability

Leadership | Indigenous Knowledge | Place, heritage and culture

The University will build the quality, renown and distinctiveness of our Indigenous research capability, research training pipeline and research leadership.

PRIORITY 1.1

Enhance the University’s research training support and postdoctoral pathways to ensure the University remains a leading and attractive destination for talented Indigenous graduate researchers

Clarify and uplift the overall ‘Melbourne Offer’ for Indigenous graduate researchers. This includes undertaking a review of PhD stipend level and top-ups against national benchmarking (part of our commitment to providing PhD candidates with a competitive living wage); initiatives to ensure a high-quality cohort experience; provision of structured programs that enhance research training; and active support to build post-PhD pathways and opportunities at the University and elsewhere.

Investigate the feasibility of offering a PhD package that includes potential pathways to academic employment at the University of Melbourne. Several models have been canvassed including a model that would provide six years of support (PhD plus two years postdoctoral). This would be competitively awarded during the PhD (not at commencement) and subject to performance and disciplinary/faculty need. This would contribute to strengthening Indigenous capability, provide more secure pathways and enhance the attractiveness of the ‘Melbourne Offer’ for Indigenous graduate researchers.

Expand and further develop culturally appropriate training of supervisors and mentors to work with Indigenous graduate researchers. Explore appropriate models for the delivery of such training, including consulting with experienced Indigenous researchers and supervisors and the Researcher Development Unit, which provides supervisor training across the University.

Explore the feasibility of a dedicated and centralised support for Indigenous graduate researchers that provides tailored advice, culturally safe spaces, advocacy support for cultural connection, and cross-University peer support programs/communities of practice. This would be developed in consultation with the Indigenous Graduate Student Association and existing Indigenous doctoral programs.

PRIORITY 1.1. CONT...

Develop pre-PhD orientation programs designed to assist interested and prospective Indigenous graduate researchers to learn more about research opportunities and PhD study.

Work with faculties to promote the range of Indigenous researcher capability programs and offerings, including the Professional Certificate and Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Research and Leadership and the PhD – Indigenous Knowledge. Promote existing MicroCerts relevant to Indigenous research and extend the range of offerings.

PRIORITY 1.2

Support the recruitment, research capability development and retention of Indigenous academics collectively and individually

In conjunction with the Indigenous Employment Framework and implementation of faculty DIDPs, support the identification and monitoring of targets for the appointment of Indigenous academic and research staff.

Integrate the aims and implementation of the IRF initiatives with faculty DIDPs and strategic research planning and with the overall Faculty Business Planning cycle.

Ensure there is a holistic and connected framework of mentorship, supervision, financial and cultural support for Indigenous academics. This would help researchers gain a sense of belonging, forge networks and sustain their academic careers, including research pathways beyond the University. The Office of Indigenous Employment and Development will be an appropriate point for coordination of this crucial support for the Indigenous academic workforce.

Work with faculties to increase the number of academic supervisors with capacity to supervise Indigenous graduate researchers and Indigenous research projects across all disciplines. Facilitate cross-faculty supervision arrangements that support Indigenous academic supervisors and graduate researchers. Canvass options to engage Indigenous external and community-based partners as members of Indigenous Graduate Researcher Advisory Committees.

Review existing internal Researcher Development Schemes to ensure funding and application guidelines support the aspirations of the IRF. Building on initiatives such as the Indigenous Knowledge Institute seed funding and the Indigenous Research McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellowship, explore the focus and warrant for any new funding schemes targeted to support Indigenous research and identify avenues for faculty co-investment and new faculty-based schemes aligned to their DIDPs.

Focus Area 2: Research quality

Truth-telling and justice | Place, heritage and culture

The University commits to supporting the highest standards for Indigenous research and to facilitating rigorous and ethical research practices.

PRIORITY 2.1

High-quality research with Indigenous participants and partners is characterised by ethical, respectful and culturally appropriate relationships*

Ensure graduate researchers and all academic staff have baseline training and knowledge about protocols of engagement in Indigenous research. This could be included as a component of academic staff and graduate researcher induction programs and also align with the planned provision of an Indigenous Cultural Education Program.

In consultation with the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity, ensure educational materials and guidance relating to institutional ethical review and committee processes align with national (e.g. AIATSIS 2020) and international ethical codes for Indigenous research (Grenz 2023).

*See AIATSIS 2020; Indigenous Knowledge Institute 2023; NHMRC 2018.

PRIORITY 2.2

The responsible management and governance of Indigenous research data at the University should align with Australian and international protocols and advance justice and truth telling**

Embed awareness and understanding of Indigenous research governance and appropriate management of Indigenous research data in all University education, training and policies related to procedures and requirements for research data management.

Develop an outward-facing Indigenous research portal that showcases and gives greater visibility to the breadth and scale of Indigenous research undertaken at the University, with the aim of enhancing its impact across academic and external communities.

** Regard should be given to the Yoorrook Justice Commission 2022 findings on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Data Governance.

Focus Area 3: Research infrastructure

Place, heritage and culture | Partnerships

The University will host world-class research infrastructure, environments and facilities that support the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.

PRIORITY 3.1

Maintain culturally safe and equitably accessible spaces (physical, digital and social) and research platforms in which Indigenous researchers, academics and professional staff can work and thrive

Ensure equitable access to the University's world-class research environment and research infrastructure and expertise.

Through the Research Infrastructure Roadmap and other strategic planning processes, implement recruitment parameters that aim to grow the proportion of Indigenous technicians and research infrastructure support staff, reflecting the urgent need to build this workforce.

In alignment with the focus on Indigenous procurement in Murmuk Djerring, and in recognition of Indigenous owners' enduring connections to the physical places where our research infrastructure is located, contribute to the process of reviewing building and place names across our campuses.

Interdisciplinary research... brings together Indigenous knowledge with other knowledge systems, unlocks new discoveries/ understandings, and brings about socially just outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Focus Area 4: Research collaboration

Partnerships | Indigenous knowledge | Place, heritage and culture

The University will enhance Indigenous research collaboration and partnerships in Australia and globally.

PRIORITY 4.1

Emphasise the development of strong and equitable community partnerships in research conducted at/ by the University with processes that recognise: the value of Indigenous knowledge and partnerships to the research sector; the rights, agency and authority of Indigenous Knowledge Holders

Establish baseline research collaboration protocols on best practice for working with Indigenous research collaborators, including co-designed research where appropriate, reciprocal non-extractive practices, and recognition of Indigenous communities' own priorities for research.

Ensure that the development of local and international Indigenous community partnerships is explicitly recognised and affirmed in academic performance review discussions and in related promotion and confirmation processes (particularly but not only for Indigenous researchers).

Establish a seed funding stream to support the development of ethically and culturally appropriate research partnerships with Indigenous communities and organisations. This would promote clear communication based on mutual expectations, and facilitate early engagement and relationship building to improve quality, ethics, feasibility and partnership approaches.

PRIORITY 4.2

Expand the scale and diversity of the University's international research programs and partnerships, working with institutional partners that demonstrate a mutual commitment to high-quality, joint Indigenous research and research training activities

Support international Indigenous research linkages by facilitating visits by Indigenous scholars and Traditional Knowledge Holders, and offering international opportunities to the University's Indigenous graduate researchers and early career academics.

Explore the development of new schemes in partnership with philanthropic and/or government agencies that support international experiences for Indigenous researchers.

Focus Area 5: Interdisciplinary research

Indigenous Knowledge | Partnerships | Leadership

The University views interdisciplinary research as an important way to bring together Indigenous knowledge with other knowledge systems, unlock new discoveries/ understandings, and bring about socially just outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

PRIORITY 5.1

Identify and support interdisciplinary research that includes Indigenous research agendas in alignment with the University's strategic priorities and the research opportunities and expertise of Indigenous researchers

Review how institutional research funding programs that provide seed grants, scholarships and fellowships also support interdisciplinary research that elevates Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous research.

Develop a coordinated plan to scope out the establishment of a new research fund to support interdisciplinary Indigenous research, working with Advancement as part of University Executive's Tier 1 commitments.

Strengthen support for PhD candidates and other researchers to develop interdisciplinary projects through existing and new programs (e.g Indigenous Knowledge Institute, Dilin Duwa Centre for Indigenous Business Leadership, Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, Onemda, Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development, Indigenous Studies Program, and Interdisciplinary Graduate Research Program in Indigenous Settler Relations).

Focus Area 6: Research translation and impact

Indigenous Knowledge | Partnerships | Truth-telling and Justice

The University aspires to foster the translation and impact of Indigenous research and knowledge to contribute to positive societal change and address the complex challenges arising from the legacies of colonisation.

PRIORITY 6.1

Research, teaching and research translation should meet the standards of the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) Principles and reflect the principles expressed in the Indigenous Knowledge Institute's Charter for Research with Indigenous Knowledge Holders

In line with University of Melbourne policies, develop institutional protocols and guidance materials on best practice approaches to intellectual property and data access when undertaking research with Indigenous communities.

Establish a new central staff resource in Research, Innovation and Commercialisation (such as Indigenous engagement specialists, or Indigenous business development managers) to generate guidance materials, and directly provide University staff with expert advice on undertaking research with Indigenous organisations, negotiating intellectual property and data access, and other collaborative aspects. This would also involve working in partnership with Chancellery Research and Enterprise and faculties to enhance the impact and outward-facing reach of our Indigenous research.

Develop University protocols and guidelines for appropriate protection and acknowledgement of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property in teaching and learning materials.

References

Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) 2020, *AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research*, AIATSIS, Canberra. Available at: <http://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/guidelines-ethical-research-australian-indigenous-studies>.

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National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 2018, *Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities: Guidelines for Researchers and Stakeholders*, Australian Government, Canberra.



About the Artist and the Artwork

Samantha Richards is a proud Indigenous woman from the Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung Tribes. The artwork featured here, Murmuk Djerring – Working Together, depicts the layers of the land, and the generations of peoples who have lived on this land, and the rich cultures and history that lie under their feet. It is where all the pieces of the puzzle connect, and by working together how we can strive for a future of positive change.