



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

Indigenous Workforce Strategy & Action Plan

2024-2028



Gnalla Moorditj Bullargar
We Are Strong Together

Just as the maali fly together, safe and streamlined, our university is stronger working together as one community.

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Western Australia acknowledges all of the custodians and traditional owners of lands across Australia, including the Whadjuk Noongar people at the Crawley campus and the Menang Noongar people at the Albany campus.

The University recognises and celebrates that these traditional owners remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their lands, and continue to practise their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge.



Foreword



Professor Amit Chakma
Vice-Chancellor

I am pleased to endorse The University of Western Australia's Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028, which outlines the University's commitment to creating a work environment where Indigenous peoples, cultures, beliefs, and values are acknowledged and respected, and where the career aspirations of Indigenous staff are supported.

The University's vision is to provide world-class education, research and community engagement for the advancement of the prosperity and welfare of all communities, including Indigenous peoples. Building upon the University's progress to date, this Strategy aligns with the *Universities Australia 2022-2025 Indigenous Strategy* to ensure Indigenous staff success and underscores a commitment to increasing the proportion of Indigenous employment to 3% to align with goals set by the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Indigenous staff play a pivotal role in Indigenous education, student success, research, culture, and heritage. Hundreds of UWA Indigenous graduates are contributing to various sectors across Western Australia and beyond. This Strategy recognises the importance of Indigenous staff and the need to create a work environment in which Indigenous peoples, cultures, beliefs, and values are acknowledged and respected, and in which the career goals and aims of Indigenous staff are identified, promoted and achieved.

While we celebrate our successes, significant effort and focus will be required to meet an employment target of 3% and plans to achieve this are embedded within this Strategy.

Many UWA Indigenous staff have led or contributed to this Strategy and I would like to extend my thanks to them.



Professor Jill Milroy
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education

In 1988, UWA established its first Indigenous programs and has since seen over 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates. These graduates represent a new generation of Indigenous leaders. They include doctors, lawyers, dentists, engineers, scientists, and arts professionals, many being the first Indigenous graduates in their field.

From its early beginnings as a Centre, the Indigenous Education portfolio now includes the School of Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Student Services, the Berndt Museum, and the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health.

Building on this success, the Indigenous Workforce Strategy shall continue to grow and develop Indigenous staff, embodying the spirit of the Noongar language, *Gnalla Moorditj Bullargar – We Are Strong Together*.

This Strategy is the outcome of the drive and dedication of many talented people. I would like to thank all Indigenous staff involved and extend my appreciation to the University Executive and Senior Leadership for their support and enthusiasm in driving this Strategy forward.

Dr Richard Walley OAM, Senior Cultural Consultant, UWA

The Maali Story woven throughout the Indigenous Workforce Strategy reflects a strong connection to Noongar heritage, enriched by the cultural wisdom captured in the artwork and concept provided by Dr Richard Walley, Noongar Elder, artist, musician, and writer.

Context

This Strategy aligns the University's activities with nationally endorsed strategies, programs and legislative guidelines for Indigenous employment, including in the higher education sector:

- The *Indigenous Advancement Strategy*, administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, which prioritises activities in a range of areas including Jobs, Land and Economy, Safety and Wellbeing, Culture and Capability, and Research and Evaluation.
- The *Indigenous Student Success Program* (ISSP) and the *Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017*, administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, require institutions to have a publicly available Indigenous Workforce Strategy as part of their eligibility for funding. A key performance indicator of this strategy is that at least 3% of the institution's employees must be Indigenous.
- The *Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-25* which outlines a range of commitments for staff success including that Universities have workforce strategies that include initiatives for attracting and retaining Indigenous staff.
- *Universities Australia Indigenous Employment Guidelines* propose practical guidelines to attract and grow Indigenous workforce the self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

In addition, the Indigenous Workforce Strategy ensures alignment with the following UWA strategies and frameworks:

- *UWA 2030* which commits to driving culturally capable leadership and a curriculum connected to Indigenous languages, culture and knowledge.
- *UWA Indigenous Strategy* which outlines the University's goals for Indigenous Education, Indigenous Research, Community and Engagement, and People, Policy and Planning.
- The *UWA Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework* which includes Indigenous Knowledge as one of the seven key Framework principles. It ensures that Indigenous staff and students have access to culturally safe and responsive mental health services for Indigenous staff and students, and delivers mandatory cultural awareness training for everyone.
- The *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2022-25* which includes increasing and supporting Indigenous staff in key priority areas.
- The *UWA Professional and General Employees Enterprise Agreement 2023* and *UWA Academic Employees Enterprise Agreement 2023* which commit the University to develop and implement a proactive, long-term strategy aimed at increasing Indigenous employment to 3% of overall staff.



Our university should feel like a safe place to come home to - a nest - for our community.



Future Directions

Current Status

While UWA maintains a consistent Indigenous staff presence, it ranks lower in both the total number and proportion of Indigenous employees compared to several Australian universities.

According to the Department of Education's Higher Education Statistics, UWA had 34 Indigenous staff members in 2023, representing 0.9% of its workforce. Within Western Australia, UWA is on par with Murdoch University but lags behind Curtin University and Edith Cowan University. The proportion of Indigenous staff at UWA is also below the average for Group of Eight (Go8) universities, where institutions like Australian National University (2.1%) and The University of Melbourne (1.8%) demonstrate stronger Indigenous representation.

In 2024, UWA reported 53 Indigenous staff members, representing approximately 1.3% of the workforce. While some discrepancies between reported and actual data remain, the University is actively investigating system enhancements to improve the accuracy of Indigenous identity disclosures within its human resources processes.

To achieve the 3% Indigenous employment target and fulfill national commitments alongside the University's enterprise agreements, UWA must not only retain its current Indigenous staff but also steadily increase the Indigenous workforce each year. The following projections are estimates and will be adjusted to reflect any increases in the total staff count.

The University will take a proactive and comprehensive approach, focusing on three key interconnected themes:

- Attraction & Recruitment
- Retention, Development & Support
- Leadership, Governance & Reporting

Nine strategic priorities have been established under these themes, with a consolidated list of strategic themes and priorities provided at the conclusion of this document.

This will deliver on the University's promise in Vision 2030 to "recognise and value Indigenous peoples' rights, knowledge, culture and values" and the commitment to "embrace Indigenous knowledge and culture to drive culturally capable leadership."

Table 1: UWA Indigenous Staff Actual (2023-2024) and Projection (2025-2028)

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Number Indigenous Staff (By Headcount)	34*	53	72	85	100	119
Proportion Indigenous Staff	0.9%	1.3%	1.8%	2.2%	2.6%	3%

Source: UWA Strategy, Planning and Performance

*Source: Department of Education Higher Education Statistics - 2023 Staff First Nations, at 31st March 2023.

Strategic Themes, Priorities & Actions

This section focuses on the three key themes:

- Attraction & Recruitment
- Retention, Development & Support, and
- Leadership, Governance & Reporting.

To ensure effective action and progress, two phases of implementation will take place. Phase 1 will cover 2024-2025 and Phase 2 2026-2028. An action plan for Phase 1 (2024-2025) is included at the end of this document. In 2025, a Phase 2 action plan will be developed for the remaining years of the Strategy (2026-2028).

A consolidated list of strategic themes and priorities is available at the end of this document.

Here we bring together conventional linear perspectives and the Indigenous understanding of our world as cyclical and continuous. At UWA, these ways of learning come together.



1 Attraction & Recruitment

The University is committed to promoting diversity and creating a climate of inclusion for diverse student and staff communities. This diversity enriches and enhances the University by incorporating a broader range of perspectives and experiences.

Indigenous communities have historically faced barriers to employment in various sectors, including higher education.

Attracting and recruiting Indigenous staff is of key importance to the success of this Strategy and meeting the 3% target. Indigenous employment opportunities at UWA will be created for both academic and professional positions, and strengthened by initiatives to support Indigenous students' transition into Higher Degree Research programs, academic employment, and other career paths.

Strategic Priority	Description
Improve mechanisms for attracting and recruiting Indigenous people	The University will grow Indigenous employment by improving its recruitment resources, policies, processes and strategies.
Build the Indigenous staff workforce	The University will build its workforce by strengthening Higher Degree Research (HDR) and academic pathways, internships, and by creating Identified positions in academic and professional priority areas.
Prioritise and incentivise Indigenous employment	The University will commit to better investing in Indigenous employment through increased resourcing.
Attraction & Recruitment Key Actions Phase 1 (2024-2025)	
• Develop specific recruitment strategies that attract Indigenous applicants	
• Appoint an Indigenous Workforce Engagement Specialist	
• Build relationships with Indigenous employment agencies to attract Indigenous applicants; increase communication and visibility with Indigenous communities	
• Work with Academic and Professional Leaders to identify priority areas for the development and recruitment of Indigenous staff roles, utilising Identified roles where appropriate	
• Create an Indigenous employment fund to incentivise the recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff	

2 Retention, Development, & Support

Building upon the University's efforts in attraction and recruitment, retention, development and support are critical components of fostering a work environment that is inclusive and contributes to the wellbeing and retention of Indigenous staff.

Within this theme, the University will develop and implement an Indigenous Cultural Capability Framework that integrates Indigenous competencies into leadership development and ensures mandatory Indigenous cultural competency training for all staff.

Strategic Priority	Description
Enhance Indigenous staff engagement and development	The University will engage, develop and improve the retention of UWA Indigenous staff.
Grow and develop Indigenous staff	The University will identify professional development needs and invest in Indigenous growth and success.
Foster Indigenous staff career advancement	The University will ensure relevant policies, processes, and career support mechanisms recognise the skills, expertise, unique roles, and responsibilities of Indigenous staff.
Strengthen cultural competence	The University will implement a Cultural Capability Framework and ensure staff undertake programs to build and maintain Indigenous cultural competency.
Retention, Development & Support Key Actions (Phase 1: 2024-2025)	
• Identify and remove barriers to Indigenous staff retention	
• Develop UWA Indigenous Staff Network and Forum	
• Identify and support Indigenous staff professional development and career advancement	
• Review Academic Promotions policies and processes to recognise skills, expertise and unique roles and responsibilities of Indigenous staff	
• Develop and launch the UWA Cultural Capability Framework	
• Ensure UWA staff undertake programs to build and maintain Indigenous cultural competency to embrace Indigenous knowledge and culture to drive culturally capable leadership	

3 Leadership, Governance, & Reporting

Effective governance, oversight, accountability, and reporting mechanisms are essential for the success of this Strategy. These will ensure effective stakeholder engagement, regular progress reviews and reporting, appropriate resource allocation, and adjustments to strategic priorities and actions based on feedback, outcomes, and changing circumstances.

An Indigenous Workforce Committee has been established to oversee the implementation of this Strategy. This Committee will also be responsible for developing the Strategy Phase 2 action plan (2026-2028).

Strategic Priority	Description
Ensure Indigenous Workforce Strategy leadership and governance	The University will ensure strong leadership, stakeholder engagement and governance from across the University to ensure completion of the actions within this Strategy.
Establish reporting mechanisms for the Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Action Plan	The University will establish effective systems, procedures, and reporting mechanisms to effectively and accurately measure and evaluate progress.
Leadership, Governance & Reporting Key Actions (Phase 1 2024-2025)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish UWA Indigenous Workforce Committee which is Indigenous-led and includes representation from across the University• Design and implement an effective reporting system to measure progress against this Plan	



Wisdom doesn't come easily. The maali's secret to gliding along the water is hard work beneath the surface.

Consolidated List of Strategic Priorities

The maali and Rose Window of Winthrop Hall entwine as a symbol of connection between UWA and Indigenous communities.



Strategic Priority	Description
Theme 1: Attraction & Recruitment	
Improve mechanisms for attracting and recruiting Indigenous people	The University will grow Indigenous employment by improving its recruitment resources, policies, processes and strategies
Build the Indigenous staff workforce	The University will build its workforce by strengthening Higher Degree Research (HDR) and academic pathways, internships, and by creating Identified positions in academic and professional priority areas
Prioritise and incentivise Indigenous employment	The University will commit to better investing in Indigenous employment through increased resourcing
Theme 2: Retention, Development & Support	
Enhance Indigenous staff engagement and development	The University will engage, develop and improve the retention of UWA Indigenous staff
Grow and develop Indigenous staff	The University will identify professional development needs and invest in Indigenous growth and success
Foster Indigenous staff career advancement	The University will ensure relevant policies, processes, and career support mechanisms recognise the skills, expertise, unique roles, and responsibilities of Indigenous staff
Strengthen cultural competence	The University will implement a Cultural Capability Framework and ensure staff undertake programs to build and maintain Indigenous cultural competency
Theme 3: Leadership, Governance, & Reporting	
Ensure Indigenous Workforce Strategy leadership and governance	The University will ensure strong leadership, stakeholder engagement and governance from across the University to ensure completion of the actions within this Strategy
Establish reporting mechanisms for the Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Action Plan	The University will establish effective systems, procedures, and reporting mechanisms to effectively and accurately measure and evaluate progress

Action Plan Phase 1 (2024 - 2025)

THEME 1: ATTRACTION & RECRUITMENT				
Strategic Priority	Action	Timeframe	Measuring outcomes	Responsibility
Improve mechanisms for attracting and recruiting Indigenous people	Develop specific recruitment strategies that attract Indigenous applicants.	2024-2025	Increase in no. of Indigenous applicants and appointments.	Chief People and Culture Officer; Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education
	Review current positions, particularly focussing on opportunities for Indigenous targeted positions and for UWA Indigenous student employment pathways; and develop guidelines for greater use of Identified positions.			
	Build relationships with Indigenous employment agencies to attract Indigenous applicants; increase communication and visibility with Indigenous communities.			
	Appoint an Indigenous Workforce Engagement Specialist (Identified position).			
Build the Indigenous staff workforce	Work with Heads of Schools and Professional Senior Leaders to identify priority areas for Indigenous staff in teaching and research positions.	2024-2025	Increase in no. of PhD students and graduates appointed to academic positions.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research); Dean Graduate Research School; Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education; Heads of Schools; Senior Leaders
	Enable academic pathways and internships through increased adoption of Academic/PhD combined roles.		Increase in no. of Indigenous staff.	
	A successful pilot program has been established in 2023 - extend the program to other Schools.		Increase in no. of Indigenous students and graduates on academic career pathways.	
	Employ Indigenous students as casual tutors and/or to Academic positions on completion of coursework studies. This enables graduates to consider academic careers prior to PhD (two staff members appointed 2023/2024).			
Prioritise and incentivise Indigenous employment	Ensure budget planning and allocation processes prioritise recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff.	2024	Increase in no. of Indigenous staff.	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Chief Financial Officer; Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education

THEME 2: RETENTION, DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT				
Strategic Priority	Action	Timeframe	Measuring outcomes	Responsibility
Enhance Indigenous staff engagement, development and retention	<p>Identify and remove barriers to Indigenous staff retention.</p> <p>Establish a regular and ongoing UWA Indigenous Staff Network and Forum.</p>	2024	<p>Increase in staff engagement (network growth and attendance).</p> <p>Increase in Indigenous staff retention.</p>	<p>Chief People and Culture Officer;</p> <p>Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education</p>
Grow and develop Indigenous staff and foster career advancement	<p>Identify, support, and provide funding for Indigenous staff professional development and career advancement needs.</p> <p>Ensure the UWA Study Leave Policy adequately supports Indigenous staff in completing undergraduate and postgraduate programs and enables them to balance study and work commitments.</p> <p>Review Academic Promotions policies and processes to recognise skills, expertise, and unique roles and responsibilities of Indigenous staff.</p> <p>Provide targeted support for Indigenous staff in a range of areas, including CV and grant funding writing, and research profile development and research impact assessment.</p>	2024-2025	<p>Increase in Indigenous academic staff promotion application and success.</p> <p>Increase in Indigenous grant funding application and success.</p> <p>Indigenous staff attendance at workshops and other training initiatives All Indigenous staff profiles reviewed/ updated within 12 months.</p>	<p>Chief People and Culture Officer;</p> <p>Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education;</p> <p>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research);</p> <p>Director, Office of Research;</p> <p>University Librarian</p>
Strengthen cultural competence	<p>Develop and launch UWA Cultural Capability Framework.</p> <p>Ensure UWA staff undertake programs to build and maintain Indigenous cultural competency to embrace Indigenous knowledge and culture to drive culturally capable leadership.</p>	2024-2025	<p>Implementation of the UWA Cultural Capability Framework and associated measures.</p>	<p>Chief People and Culture Officer;</p> <p>Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education;</p> <p>Senior Leaders</p>

THEME 3: LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & REPORTING				
Strategic Priority	Action	Timeframe	Measuring outcomes	Responsibility
Ensure Indigenous Workforce Strategy leadership and governance	<p>Establish regular meetings for the Indigenous Workforce Committee which includes Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education; Indigenous Cultural Advisor; Chief People and Culture Officer; Indigenous Workforce Engagement Specialist; Director, Strategy, Planning and Performance, and senior Academic and Professional Indigenous staff members.</p> <p>Monitor progress and promote the Indigenous Workforce Strategy to the University community and provide regular progress updates.</p>	2024-2025	<p>Quarterly Committee meetings are held.</p> <p>The Strategy is regularly communicated to all-staff.</p>	Chief People and Culture Officer; Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education
Establish effective reporting mechanisms for the Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Action Plan	<p>Improve data collection and reporting from employment onboarding to career progression and exit, to ensure accuracy and relevance of data in decision making.</p> <p>Develop reporting mechanisms and dashboards to report on the measuring outcomes outlined in this action plan.</p>	2024-2025	<p>Improved data collection and accuracy in data reporting.</p> <p>Quarterly progress report is provided to and reviewed by the Committee.</p>	Director, Strategy, Planning and Performance; Chief People and Culture Officer; Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education



The maali stands proudly on the UWA coat of arms, as our community stands proudly as thought leaders and creators, sharers of knowledge and seekers of wisdom.



Danjoo Kaartdijin
Noongar artist Sharyn Egan

This artwork embodies the strong symbol of the Black Swan watching over the nest. The Swan's wings expand in a protective embrace, providing a source of strength and belonging, a place to call home.

