

USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Framework

Rationale

The adoption of a USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Framework is part of a suite of strategies that USQ is adopting to support a more socially just Australia. As a basis for social mobility, improved employment outcomes and improved quality of life, education represents an important enabler. In supporting improved outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and communities, higher education has a special role to play in achieving equity for Indigenous peoples in Australia. Further, in preparing educated people for professional and leadership roles, higher education institutions have the capacity to influence outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

The National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency (Universities Australia, 2011) and the Behrendt Report (Australian Government, 2012) raised awareness of the need for organisation wide approaches. Two key principles within these Frameworks are that a whole-of-university approach is essential for the University to achieve its aims in this area and that Indigenous affairs are everyone's business.

These high level documents propose that the responsibility for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and peoples, is a whole-of-university effort which may require the (re)shaping of organisational culture(s), paradigms and practices. It is critical that efforts not be marginalised and that all members of the University play a role.

With this in mind, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Framework is intended to provide a consolidated approach and to highlight the link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency, Social Justice and Reconciliation. The adoption of the USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Framework will also support the broader vision of the USQ Strategic Plan 2016-2020 through the development of a University culture that values diversity and inclusiveness and by providing leadership in producing graduates who are highly regarded as practical, innovative and connected professionals.

In response to this broader political framework and building on the work already accomplished within the USQ community, the Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Jan Thomas formed a working party to develop the USQ Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The RAP was developed through multiple processes of consultation and feedback with staff, students and the broader community across the footprint of the University and reflects the directions and aspirations of our specific context. The development of a USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency (ATSICC) Framework was identified as one of the outcomes of the RAP. However, once adopted, the Framework will act as an 'umbrella' document under which relevant plans (e.g. USQ RAP) and strategies (e.g. USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Development and Employment Strategy) will sit.

Ownership by the University leadership.

The Vice-Chancellor and the executive leadership team own this process.

Have the tough conversations.
Fostering diversity and inclusion is not an act of celebration.
It's hard work.

USQ Responsibilities around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency

USQ considers the responsibilities around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency to fall across two interdependent domains; the organisation and the individual.

Responsibilities for the organisation:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency in this domain requires an organisational culture which is committed to social justice, human rights and the process of reconciliation through valuing and supporting Indigenous cultures, knowledges and peoples as integral to the core business of the institution. It requires effective and inclusive policies and procedures, monitoring mechanisms and allocation of sufficient resources to foster culturally competent behaviour and practice at all levels of the institution. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency requires commitment to a whole of institution approach, including increasing the University's engagement with Indigenous communities, Indigenisation of the curriculum, proactive provision of services and support to Indigenous students, capacity building of Indigenous staff, professional development of non-Indigenous staff and the inclusion of Indigenous cultures and knowledges as a visual and valued aspect of University life, governance and decision-making.

Responsibilities for the individual:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency in this domain includes and staff knowledge and understanding of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and contemporary realities and awareness of Indigenous protocols, combined with the proficiency to engage and work effectively in Indigenous contexts congruent to the expectations of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in order to deliver culturally competent work practices and curriculum. Cultural competency includes the ability to critically reflect on one's own culture and professional paradigms in order to understand its cultural limitations and effect positive change.

Under these responsibilities, we can see two separate but inter-related set of foci for a USQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Framework. These are:

Organisational foci core commitment to social justice and reconciliation, restructuring of process and structures for culturally competent behaviour and practice, and indigenisation of the institution through all core domains, including capacity building of staff and engagement with Indigenous community.

Individual foci building up of knowledge and understanding, critical reflection on values and attitudes of self and profession and skill development relevant to profession.

These foci are reflected in the Responsibilities listed in the diagram following.

Notes on terminology:

Professional Learning: Professional learning is where staff engages in purposeful training and development opportunities designed to enhance and support their learning and professional growth.

Professional practices: In this context, professional practices are where staff uses informed decision making to integrate new learning into existing practice.

