



University of  
Southern  
Queensland



# UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework

2024-2025

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a bundle of green leaves. The person is wearing a vibrant, multi-colored woven garment in shades of red, blue, and yellow. They are also wearing a black wristband. The background is slightly blurred, showing another person's legs in dark pants and a sandy or rocky ground. The overall scene suggests a traditional or cultural activity, possibly related to land management or ceremony.

## Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways where the University is located and recognises and respects that these places have long been, and continue to be places of knowledge exchange, sharing, wisdom, and philosophy for many tens of thousands of years. Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of First Nations Australians along with the important contributions they have and continue to make in Australian society, and pay our deepest respect to all Elders past and present.

UniSQ also recognises the ongoing impact that colonisation has had on First Nations peoples, families, and communities across Australia, and sees employment as a positive means of supporting self-determination, inclusion, equity, and healing across multiple generations while also promoting truth-telling, justice, and reconciliation within the institution.

Note: We recognise the terms 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous', however, to reflect the overall position of First Nations education and research at the University of Southern Queensland, the preferred terminology is 'First Nations' or 'First Nations Australians'.

## Our Values

Guided by our core organisational values of respect, integrity and excellence, and in respect for First Nations peoples deep sense of time, place, belonging, and purpose, the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) is committed to empowering First Nations peoples in taking their rightful place in our teaching, research, community engagement and enterprise.

We take pride in embracing the living cultures of First Nations peoples, recognising and respecting their knowledges, histories, communities, languages, and cultures. We recognise and value the importance of First Nations' individual and community cultural responsibilities.

We continually strive to be recognised as a leading institution in First Nations teaching, learning, research and community engagement by taking adaptive and responsive approaches to the evolving needs of First Nations communities.

## Purpose

The University of Southern Queensland is committed to increasing the education, employment, and career development opportunities for all First Nations peoples.

Through an active, whole-of-University approach to developing cultural safety for First Nations peoples, we strive to offer meaningful, purposeful employment opportunities and experiences that promote positive change within First Nations communities, as well as further opportunities for growth across all career streams and pathways.

Our commitment is underpinned by and aligned with key national strategies, most notably the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025. The UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025 is designed to support this national sector direction and also aligns with the University's strategic plans and other key plans, including the UniSQ Strategic Plan 2021-2025, UniSQ People Strategy and the UniSQ Blueprint for First Nations.

This UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework builds on the learnings and outcomes from the range of First Nations career and employment strategies and plans the University has adopted since 2006.

The UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025 aims to:

- support the goal of increasing First Nations employment and participation at all levels and in all organisational areas across the University;
- maximise First Nations employee development and career opportunities to increase the proliferation of First Nations knowledges, job skills, job satisfaction, job security, and economic empowerment; and
- facilitate and encourage the direct involvement of First Nations employees in determining their employment and career goals, strategies, and ambitions, in accordance with their own aspirations.

## Governance and Accountability

Effective implementation of the UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025 requires a whole-of-University approach along with a shared commitment to its goals, objectives and actions by all leaders, employees and communities working in partnership to achieve positive outcomes for First Nations people at the University. Achieving the aims of the Strategic Framework depends on strong leadership and governance, along with the appropriate allocation of resources, and the implementation of key actions within a culturally safe and inclusive University environment. Through strong and dynamic executive leadership and buy-in at all levels, guided by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations Education and Research) and supported by the Senior Advisor (First Nations Workforce Strategy), all University Divisions will commit to the Strategy and ensure appropriate priority is given to First Nations education and employment across all levels of the organisation.

The University will establish a First Nations Workforce Committee which will be Chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (First Nations Education and Research). The Committee will oversee the implementation, monitoring and review of the Strategic Framework as the University progresses toward a baseline goal of a minimum of 3.6% of UniSQ staff who identify as First Nations Australians, with a stretch and growth goal of exceeding the baseline and achieving levels of representation reflective of the First Nations population of working age in our communities (4.5% as at 2023). In doing so, the Committee will have an obligation to consult widely with First Nations employees, students, stakeholders, and community representatives on matters pertaining to First Nations employment, while actively contributing to and enriching the University's employer of choice status. The First Nations Workforce Committee will be accountable to the Vice Chancellor's Executive (VCE) and will oversee the reporting of key actions and outcomes to ensure a high level of transparency and accountability to the First Nations students, families, and communities that we service.

Operationalising the Strategic Framework 2024-2025 is further enabled by various supporting plans, strategies and activities throughout the organisation which provide more detail of underlying activities, tasks and deliverables for key actions, and identification of responsible and accountable officers. The People Portfolio will coordinate regular reporting on progress on strategies and activities, and on outcomes against performance and accountability measures contained within the Strategy, to the First Nations Workforce Committee. The Progress Report will provide details of focus areas, actions, activities, outcomes, and workforce metrics for each period.

## Guiding Principles

The University acknowledges the following as foundations for the development of the guiding principles of the UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework:

- It is recognised that while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the two main cultural groups in Australia, this continent is and always has been home to more than 200-400 diverse Nations with their own practices, process and protocols which have sustained them for more than 65,000 years.
- It is also recognised that First Nations peoples are the oldest continuing living culture in the world and that First Nations peoples are the First Peoples and cultures of Australia.
- First Nations cultures, identities, heritages, languages, lore/law, custodianship, and social and spiritual systems practiced by diverse groups within First Nations society is respected and recognised. In this, First Nations knowledges are recognised as a significant contributor to all other bodies of knowledge, and we acknowledge the scholarship, research, and expertise that these employees bring to the University.
- It is acknowledged and accepted that participation of First Nations peoples in cultural, community and related activities has the capacity to enhance employee engagement and development and therefore provision for participation in cultural, ceremonial and community activities is of direct benefit to the University.

Underpinned by these guiding principles, the University is committed to:

- Fostering a workplace culture of mutual respect and understanding that puts cultural safety and inclusion at the forefront of all its operations.
- Understanding our shared history, and our collective response towards righting the wrongs of the past.
- Strengthening employment and career development opportunities for potential and existing employees, students, and graduates to increase the numbers of First Nations employees across all areas and levels of the organisation to meet the baseline target of a minimum of 3.6% of UniSQ staff who identify as First Nations Australians, whilst working towards our growth goal of levels of representation reflective of the First Nations population of working age in our communities (4.5% as at 2023).
- Ensuring that First Nations employees are supported by university policies and procedures aimed at removing direct and structural racism across all work areas and the University as a whole.
- Actively assisting in embedding of First Nations cultures, identities, heritages, languages, and social and spiritual systems.
- Appropriate resourcing and funding to ensure the effective implementation of this Strategy and allocation of budget towards staff development and advancement.

## Strategic Framework

The intention of UniSQ's First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025 is to provide an overview of key objectives in developing and maintaining a high-quality, sustainable cohort of First Nations academic, research, professional and senior employees through a multi-faceted and coordinated whole-of-University approach.

The UniSQ First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025 outlines strategic activities focussed on five key areas:

- Cultural safety
- Attraction and recruitment
- Retention
- Development
- Community

### 1. Cultural Safety

**We foster culturally safe environments for First Nations employees which promotes a greater understanding of the importance of First Nations cultures and the contributions that First Nations peoples make to the University and its communities.**

#### *Objectives*

1.1 Continue to build culturally safe workplaces which recognises and values the important contributions of First Nations peoples, the intersectionality of First Nations Peoples, histories, languages, places, and cultures.

1.2 Increase Cultural Safety through education, professional development and collaborative partnerships and relationships with First Nations communities both internally and externally.

1.3 Build the expectation that Cultural Safety is understood, implemented and demonstrated in all teams.

#### *Key Actions*

1.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive professional development Cultural Safety program that that develops empathetic culturally safe behaviours by all UniSQ employees.

1.2 Facilitate and support programs, events and activities that support cultural inclusion for all employees and to improve Cultural Safety for First Nations employees.

#### *Measurement*

1.1 Ongoing monitoring and analysis of data pertaining to mandatory Cultural Safety professional development opportunities to all UniSQ employees as part of on boarding and annual refresher training.

1.2 Cultural Safety goals embedded within performance planning frameworks.

1.3 Record, measure and analyse UniSQ employee engagement and participation in Cultural Safety professional development programs.

## 2. Attraction and Recruitment

UniSQ strives to be a nationally recognised First Nations *employer of choice* by prioritising person-centred strength-based approaches within all areas of First Nations attraction, recruitment, career-advancement, social and emotional wellbeing.

### **Objectives**

2.1 Establish and implement proactive talent sourcing campaigns and culturally safe recruitment strategies which maximise opportunities for First Nations peoples participation and success.

2.2 Create a meaningful UniSQ First Nations employer value proposition through partnerships with internal and external stakeholders to market employment opportunities and pathways at the University to First Nations talent pools.

2.3 Provide a First Nations career pathway program that offers multiple entry points and a supported pipeline to employment, including leveraging the University's own First Nations student and graduate cohorts.

2.4 Provide and promote leadership pathways for First Nations employees, alumni and external candidates.

### **Key Actions**

2.1 Establish a whole-of-University approach for First Nations employment targets across all career streams, levels, and functions.

2.2 Increase opportunities for and promotion to First Nations people through culturally safe and inclusive practices and initiatives, such as Identified positions, the creation of First Nations talent pools, and recruitment processes that remove barriers to application and appointment.

2.3. Develop and implement career pathways that offer a range of targeted initiatives which actively explore, promote and increase First Nations employee representation, such as a focus on converting First Nations students to employees. This may include initiatives such as post-doctoral fellowships, graduate opportunities, internships, 'Students as Partners', and/or casual employment opportunities.

### **Measurement**

2.1 Increased number of identifying First Nations staff employed at UniSQ equivalent to a minimum baseline of 3.6% of the total workforce over the life of the Strategy. Monitor and report progress towards the growth goal of exceeding the baseline and achieving levels of representation reflective of the First Nations population of working age in our communities (4.5% as at 2023).

2.2 Increased promotion of employment opportunities to UniSQ First Nations students, alumni, employees, and communities by ways of First Nations Employee Value Proposition.

2.3 Ongoing monitoring and reporting of the talent attraction and recruitment data pertaining to the First Nations workforce, including advertising initiatives, application data and assessing talent pools for Identified and non-Identified roles.

### 3. Retention

**We empower leaders, managers and supervisors to develop, model and promote culturally safe workplace practices and behaviours across all areas of the university to enrich the First Nations employment experience.**

#### ***Objectives***

- 3.1 Leaders, managers and supervisors demonstrate their commitment to First Nations Cultural Safety, social and emotional wellbeing, and inclusion.
- 3.2 Mechanisms and supports are in place across UniSQ to build understanding and appropriately recognise the impact of First Nations cultural loading and take an active approach to address factors which contribute to cultural load at a whole-of-University level.
- 3.3 Culturally significant days are recognised and celebrated, with a university wide understanding of and support for First Nations cultural and ceremonial obligations and responsibilities.

#### ***Key Actions***

- 3.2 Build inclusive leadership behaviours by explicitly shifting cultural safety and accountability to leadership levels, supported by professional development and practical resources.
- 3.2 Review and revise relevant policy, procedures, and processes to ensure that additional cultural workload expected of First Nations employees is recognised in activities such as workload planning, performance review, career progression and promotion.
- 3.3 Build and implement initiatives and networks for Identified staff, led by First Nations employees which supports experience initiatives and networks.
- 3.4 Increase visibility and knowledge of resources that support the consistent application of Cultural and Ceremonial Leave.

#### ***Measurement***

- 3.1 Regularly monitor and review Workload Allocation to assess their effectiveness in combatting cultural load.
- 3.2 Usage rates for Cultural and Ceremonial Leave are monitored through regular reporting.
- 3.3 Monitoring of First Nations employee retention and turnover rates,
- 3.4 Monitor opportunities for conversion of casual and/or fixed-term roles into continuing positions.

## 4. Development

**We prioritise, implement, and embed innovative and structured ‘Grow Your Own’ approaches to career commencement, progression, and learning and development opportunities.**

### ***Objectives***

4.1 Ensure all First Nations employees have access to career-planning tools and are provided with opportunities and support to discuss, identify, and progress self-determined career goals and objectives.

4.2 Encourage and support First Nations student and employee employment trajectories and pathways into positions including executive level roles through strategic First Nations workforce planning initiatives, professional development, and career planning.

4.3 Enhance professional support and development networks through coaching and mentoring opportunities for First Nations.

### ***Key Actions***

4.1 Implement a system-wide culturally safe career planning mechanism to assist managers and supervisors in appropriately supporting First Nations employees to identify, record, track, and define career goals.

4.2 Develop a First Nations talent development program which creates multiple pathways for First Nations employment and career trajectories, including into leadership and executive positions.

4.3. Provide ongoing opportunities for First Nations students and employees to access career development opportunities such as First Nations coaching and mentoring, sponsorship, scholarships, secondments, and internal and external professional development programs.

### ***Measurement***

4.1 Regularly assess and monitor the offering of and participation in UniSQ First Nations professional and career development opportunities with a focus on continual suitability and improvement.

4.2 Increased internal and external recognition of success for First Nations employees including awards, grants and other activities which raise the profile of employees.

4.3 Review and report on participation and success rates of internal and external career progression programs.

## 5. Community

**We are committed to increasing our overall First Nations community capacity, engagement, networking, research and participation through a range of opportunities designed to generate a culturally safe University environment.**

### ***Objectives***

5.1 Increase the University's profile within First Nations communities by actively building on new and existing relationships within the UniSQ footprint to develop partnerships.

5.2 Nurture active and vibrant internal First Nations networks providing professional support, advocacy, and consultation to enrich the First Nations employment experience.

5.3 Enhance opportunities for First Nations staff to collaborate and share in successes while strengthening the overall relationships within First Nations populations.

5.4 Build research opportunities between First Nations communities across the UniSQ's footprint as the University of choice for culturally safe research practices and partnerships.

### ***Key Actions***

5.1 Increase UniSQ's profile and partnerships within its footprint by hosting opportunities for local and regional First Nations community members, including First Nations Traditional Custodians, Elders, schools, leaders, councillors, and organisations.

5.2 Support employees in establishing and facilitating regular First Nations networks, events and/or meetings for the purposes of networking, information sharing and a platform for employees to voice concerns to senior leaders in the University.

5.3 Build culturally safe practices within the workforce that contribute to the development of research practices and relationships with First Nations communities across UniSQ's footprint.

### ***Measurement***

5.1 Measure staff participation rates and provide ongoing support for First Nations events and activities held within the University.

5.2 Measurement of partnership and research opportunities between UniSQ and First Nation communities across our footprint.

## Conclusion

UniSQ's goal through the implementation of the First Nations Strategic Workforce Framework 2024-2025 is to recognise, retain, and embrace the valuable skills, knowledges, perspectives, and experiences that First Nations Australians bring to the workplace and contemporary society.

It is through a whole-of-University approach, along with commitment and investment from all employees and executives that UniSQ will create leading practice opportunities which enable the development and advancement of First Nations peoples to take their rightful place in teaching, research, community engagement and enterprise. We understand that this can only be achieved through establishing genuine, transparent, and robust relationships with First Nations stakeholders including staff, students, community members, organisations, Elders, Traditional Custodians, and Country.

UniSQ therefore acknowledges the profound importance of relationships and connections with First Nations communities as a fundamental touchstone to achieving these objectives.



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