

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Learning Plan 2021-2022

Introduction

In December 2018, UQ launched its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2019 - 2022. Developing and implementing the RAP is a key commitment within UQ's Strategic Plan 2018-2021. One of the key actions within the RAP is to increase staff and student understandings and appreciation of unique and diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, languages and achievements¹. One of the deliverables for this action is to develop, implement and evaluate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning package with consideration to blended learning and best practice.

Cultural learning is a key component for working towards cultural competency at UQ. The Cultural Learning Plan formulated by reviewing University Australia's priorities^{2,3,4}, the literature and findings from UQ consultation with senior leaders, staff and students, outlines activities for staff and students to better understand how to work towards building and strengthening organisational cultural competence. The activities provide non-Indigenous staff and students with opportunities to meaningfully engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and content to deepen understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges, histories, languages and achievements.

Aim

To facilitate UQ-wide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning to enhance UQ's organisational cultural competency.

Objectives

- To increase knowledge and skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges, histories, languages and achievements through education, meaningful engagement and critical reflection.
- Support UQ staff and students with ongoing cultural learning to better inform implementing reconciliation initiatives UQ-wide..
- Monitor executive and staff cultural learning completions to report to UQ governing committees and Reconciliation Australia and identify recommendations for continuing cultural learning opportunities.

1 University of Queensland 2018. University of Queensland Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2019 – 2022. Accessed at <https://about.uq.edu.au/files/535/UQ-RAP.pdf>

2 Universities Australia. 2011. National Best Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities. Accessed at <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/National-Best-Practice-Framework-for-Indigenous-Cultural-Competency-in-Australian-Universities.pdf>

3 Universities Australia. 2011. Guiding Principles for Developing Cultural Competency in Australian Universities. Accessed at <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Guiding-Principles-for-Developing-Indigenous-Cultural-Competency-in-Australian-Universities.pdf>

4 Universities Australia. 2017. Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020. Accessed at <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Indigenous-Strategy-v16-1.pdf>

Brisbane River pattern from A Guidance Through Time by Casey Coolwell and Kyra Mancktelow



Activities

UQ's cultural learning package contains a range of activities including the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' (AIATSIS's) Core Cultural Learning Foundation Course, a series of face-to-face/ Zoom cultural capability workshops with staff, educational events, social and community engagements and the UQRAP Network for students and staff.

Core Cultural Learning Foundation Course is an online ten module introductory course. For staff, the first two modules are mandatory training and completion of all ten modules attracts a gift to continue cultural learning. The target for completion of the mandatory modules is 85% of staff by the end of 2022.

UQ also engages external cultural learning providers to deliver **face-to-face or online workshops and on-Country immersion experiences**. The Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement) provides at least three cultural learning workshops per year for staff. Organisational units including faculties, institutes, portfolios, schools and centres may choose to provide cultural learning specific to a geographical location or Country or within a discipline or field of interest.

The Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement) collaborates with Student Affairs, faculties, institutes, schools, UQ Art Museum, UQ Library and portfolios to organise **educational events**. The UQ educational events are designed to facilitate an ongoing cultural learning process where people can continue to deepen knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures, histories, languages and protocols. Educational events at UQ to date have included include seminars, panel discussions, trivia nights, conferences or workshops and staff are strongly encouraged to attend events organised externally to UQ.

Social and community engagements include a broad range of social, cultural and professional development events and activities, such as public lectures, forums and volunteer/student placement opportunities. The engagements provide students and staff with opportunities to connect with local, regional, state and national knowledges, perspectives and issues.

Whilst staff and students can engage with each activity separately, the **UQRAP Network** provides a mechanism for students and staff to bring together and continue cultural learning across the range of activities. The Network aims to educate and empower non-Indigenous people to critically reflect and apply learnings congruent with the expectations of and in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Membership has three tiers – RAP Friend (entry level), RAP Partner and RAP Agent (of Change) to reflect growing knowledge of and respectful activity in reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters. Members of the Network are invited to meetings every two months and can access resources, discussions and promotions through RAPN Community on Microsoft Teams.

Professor Deborah Terry AO, Vice Chancellor and President addresses attendees of the UQRAP Network launch at St Lucia (credit: Paul Neil Photography)



Timeframe

The Cultural Learning Plan is aligned to the RAP timeframe for the end of 2022 and will be revised in line with the next RAP development timeframe.

Measurement

UQ is committed to tracking and reporting on UQ Innovate RAP deliverables including the Cultural Learning Plan. Reporting on cultural learning completions and achievements is provided internally to UQ's RAP Oversight Committee, Senate Committee for Equity Diversity and Inclusion and University Senior Leadership Group, and externally to Reconciliation Australia.

UQRAP Network activities and collaborations will be monitored and tracked through the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement) for RAP reporting in UQ's governance committees and Reconciliation Australia.

Conclusion

UQ's Cultural Learning Plan outlines the ways in which UQ seeks to ensure its students and staff have an understanding and appreciation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and identities. The Plan is a key component for developing UQ's cultural competency, creating safe and inclusive environments at the University for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Professor Deborah Terry AO, Vice Chancellor and President and Professor Bronwyn Fredericks, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement) present Ms Emma Olssen, Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit with a gift for being the first UQ staff member to complete all ten Core Cultural Learning Modules (credit: Paul Neil Photography)

