

ACGR Good Practice Guidelines for
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander
Research Education

Version 2: August 2021

About these guidelines

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers play a crucial role in advancing an innovative Australian research agenda. They bring unique knowledges, experiences, identities and strengths that contribute to research that has widespread benefit nationally and internationally.

Encouraging and supporting Indigenous people to undertake higher degree research (HDR) training benefits individuals and communities while also creating a significant benefit to the research system and the nation's prosperity and well-being. Increasing the cultural capability of universities to provide a policy environment to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers is pivotal for enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research.

Using the guidelines

These Guidelines have been collaboratively developed with appreciated support and advice from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC). The Guidelines provide credible, constructive and practical advice for candidates, supervisors, universities and other stakeholders. They should be read alongside the Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles¹ which articulate a set of standards considered to be essential for the delivery of graduate research programs and are part of a suite of Good Practice Guidelines² that are designed to support institutions as they develop their strategies and processes in particular important areas of operation.

Message from NATSIHEC

NATSIHEC supports the guidelines and the commitment to creating a national university landscape that is conducive to the successful journeys of current and future Indigenous graduate research candidates, and the contributions these scholars will make globally. The Guidelines recognise the knowledge production and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that has sustained the survival of the longest living culture in the world. The Guidelines aspire to build on these legacies creating opportunities for increasing the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within universities and beyond. We look forward to a continued respectful and reciprocal relationship with ACGR in ensuring the ongoing advancement of Indigenous graduate research education outcomes.

¹[Graduate Research Good Practice Principles](#)

²[Graduate Research Good Practice Guidelines](#)

Acknowledgement of Country

ACGR acknowledges traditional owners of all of the Australian lands on which we work and meet, and we pay our respects to their Elders—past, present and emerging.

Recommendations

ACGR makes the following recommendations to universities:

Prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research education

1. Ensure that the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate research is recognised across all levels of university governance and is supported by an explicit policy framework.
2. Establish ambitious but realistic targets for recruitment and graduation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate research candidates and report on these as part of an adaptive management cycle.
3. Recognise and celebrate the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates at an institutional level.

Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidate numbers

4. Develop a recruitment strategy by engaging with Indigenous alumni, academics, university Indigenous centres, institutions and community groups.
5. Support the transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduates to higher degree research programs.
6. Conduct outreach programs to demonstrate the value of graduate research education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their communities.
7. Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals who are looking for career development and/or change.
8. Establish stipend scholarships that meet the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates and recognise their family responsibilities and high-value services they may provide in their schools and faculties (such as curriculum and assessment design, cultural advisory services, networking opportunities, or informal cultural competency training to staff).
9. Provide flexible entry pathways that include bridging programs and recognize professional practice during the selection process.

Providing culturally competent³ engagement and opportunities

10. Provide welcoming, supportive and culturally safe environments.
11. Develop initiatives that encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate research candidates' families and communities to support them.
12. Establish support networks of senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics within and across institutions.
13. Encourage connections to community mentors, Elders and/or expert cultural knowledge holders.
14. Provide cohort support at the level of institutions and institutional groupings and encourage candidates to join national and international peer networks.
15. Provide mentoring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates who seek this within their candidature.
16. Develop a dedicated website or other online applications that facilitate peer networking and informs candidates of the support available both within the university and through national programs such as the National Indigenous Research and Knowledge Network and the Indigenous Studies Research Network.
17. Invest adequately in research capacity building programs that support successful progression and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates.

Maximising supervision capabilities

18. Provide appropriate academic professional development training in Indigenous Research Methodologies to ensure supervisors can effectively supervise both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates or non-Indigenous candidates undertaking Indigenous-related research.
19. Encourage the practices of including an appropriately academically qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supervisor on supervisory panels and using appropriately academically qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander examiners wherever appropriate.
20. Improve peer networks for all supervisors to share learnings and approaches.

³ Cultural competence includes student and staff knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian 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 Indigenous Australian peoples. [Indigenous-Cultural-Competence Higher Education](#)

Promoting unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

21. Include workshops on Indigenous knowledges and intellectual property as part of the academic professional development of all graduate research candidates and supervisors.
22. Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and global First Nations scholarship in relevant coursework subjects.
23. Ensure supervisors are aware of relevant national research ethics guidelines, such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies.

Providing careers assistance

24. Provide guidance and mentoring for a wide range of careers, and practical assistance tailored to individual needs.
25. Facilitate internships with potential employers.
26. Engage with industry and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other First Nations community-based organisations where appropriate to develop partnerships and collaborative career opportunities for Indigenous graduate research candidates.
27. Work with industry to develop partnerships and collaborative career opportunities.