
Version	2.1
Short description	A Policy on the Support of Indigenous Students
Relevant to	All employees
Authority	Executive Committee
Policy owner	Director, Student Life Services
Responsible office	Student Life Services
Date approved	20 September 2018
Date effective	20 September 2018
Review due	September, 2022
Related Avondale documents	
Related legislation	
Key words	Policy, Indigenous, student support

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This document sets out Avondale University's (Avondale) policy on the support and acknowledgement of Indigenous students.
- 1.2 Guiding Principles - as a Christian institution we value:
 - a) Relationships with first peoples of the land where we reside. We seek to understand and respect the significance of the past and on-going co-existence of the Awabakal, Kuringgai and other Indigenous nations.
 - b) Cross-cultural communication, knowledge and understanding of both staff and students, ensuring the maximisation of empowerment in all academic pursuits.
 - c) Systemic, organisational, professional and individual cultural competency. See [National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities](#)
 - d) A commitment to the principles of Reconciliation Australia. See [Reconciliation Australia](#)
- 1.3 The objectives of the Indigenous Support Policy are to:
 - (a) Maintain or improve Indigenous undergraduate progression, success, and completion rates.
 - (b) Increase Indigenous participation in governance of Avondale.
 - (c) Foster cultural awareness and competence of all professional and general staff.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This document applies to all Avondale staff and students.

3. REFERENCES

- 3.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Avondale Reconciliation Statement and Terms of Reference for the Indigenous Consultative Committee.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country** - Acknowledgement of Country is an Oral and written recognition of traditional landowners, showing respect. It can be given by both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. See example: [Charles Sturt University | Guidelines](#). Welcome to Country is delivered by traditional owners or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders who have been given permission by the traditional owners of the land. See example: [Avondale | Welcome to Country](#). See also [UniSA | Reconciliation Australia | Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country](#).
- 4.2 **ITAS** - Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme.
- 4.3 **ATSIM** - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministries (ATSIM) is a department of the Australian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with stakeholders in each local Conference region.
- 4.4 **Closing the gap** - Is a long-term, ambitious framework that builds on the foundation of respect and unity provided by the 2008 National Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Peoples. It acknowledges that improving opportunities for Indigenous Australians requires intensive and sustained effort from all levels of government, as well as the private and not-for-profit sectors, communities, and individuals.

See:

- [COAG | Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage](#)
- [Dept of the Prime Minister and Cabinet | Continued Commitment to Indigenous Affairs | Education](#)

To monitor change, the [Council of Australian Governments \(COAG\)](#) has set measurable targets to monitor improvements in the health and wellbeing of the Indigenous population. These targets focus on:

- a) health
- b) housing
- c) early childhood
- d) education
- e) economic participation
- f) and remote service delivery

4.5 **Cross cultural, communication knowledge and understanding** - Understanding the impact of words and actions on people from different cultural groups.

4.6 **Cultural competence** - “A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, [awareness, understanding] and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.” See [National Best Practice Framework for Cultural Competency in Australian Universities](#)

4.7 **Indigenous** - “[P]eople of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and are accepted as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person in the community in which they live or have lived.” See [UNSW | Indigenous Terminology](#)

4.8 **Local Aboriginal Communities** - The local Aboriginal communities for our campuses are as follows:

- a) Awabakal - traditional territory spreads from Wollombi in the south, the Lower Hunter River near Newcastle and Lake Macquarie in the south.
- b) Kuringgai - traditional territory spreads from north of Sydney Harbour, through Lane Cover River, Middle Harbour, Pittwater, the Hawkesbury River, Broken Bay, Brisbane Water and Central Coast to north of Tuggerah Lakes.

4.9 **NAIDOC** - National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC). See [NAIDOC](#)

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

University Executive

5.1 Implementing the development, maintenance, and monitoring of the Indigenous elements of the Avondale University Strategic Plan where appropriate.

- 5.2 Encouraging, promoting, and monitoring the professional development of academic and general staff in relation to cultural competence, communication, and reconciliation.
- 5.3 Sourcing and approving regular funding for the support of Indigenous students from bodies such as ATAS.
- 5.4 Providing opportunity for Indigenous cultural expression and initiative (see point 8 below).
- 5.5 Appointing the Indigenous Consultative Committee.
- 5.6 Fostering relationships and on-going academic conversations between Avondale and Mamarapha, as well as other Indigenous denominational education institutions.

Indigenous Consultative Committee

- 5.7 Reviewing the University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Policy.
- 5.8 Supporting the development and review of the Indigenous elements of the University Strategic Plan.
- 5.9 Providing feedback relating to Indigenous students and their wellbeing.
- 5.10 Recommending and advising on initiatives relating to Closing the Gap.

Student Support Services

- 5.11 In consultation with the Indigenous Consultative Committee, be responsible for:
 - 5.11.1 Social
 - a) Building connectedness by providing regular cultural and social interaction opportunity amongst students and staff.
 - 5.11.2 Academic support
 - a) Providing culturally competent tutorial services.
 - b) Actively seeking financial support for these services.
 - c) Creating a culturally safe space that fosters understanding and cultural connectedness.
 - 5.11.3 Equity
 - a) Promoting social justice and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
 - b) Recommending culturally specific services and resources.
 - 5.11.4 Counselling
 - a) Continuing awareness of current personal, academic and social issues that face Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
 - b) Recommending culturally specific services and resources.

Faculties and Departments

- 5.12 Interacting with the Indigenous components of the University strategic plan and recommendations, developing appropriate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- 5.13 Mandating all staff attend professional development opportunities that enhance cultural competence.
- 5.14 Finding opportunities to expressly teach cross-cultural competencies, inclusivity, and Indigenous perspectives.

- 5.15 Exploring ways of appropriately marketing Avondale courses to Indigenous students.
- 5.16 Observing cultural protocols as appropriate. See point 8 below.

6. PROTOCOLS

Protocols should include, but are not exclusive to the following:

- 6.1 Acknowledgement of country and nations or welcome to country included at all significant Avondale events, such as:
- a) Graduation
 - b) Conferences
 - c) Seminars
 - d) Presentations
 - e) Open days
 - f) Public events
- Recognise that other occasions may also present an opportunity for a welcome to country or acknowledgement of country.
- 6.2 Any occasion on which the Australian national flag is raised, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags should also be raised.
- 6.3 When needed, be aware of culturally sensitive images of deceased Indigenous people and the mentioning of their names, giving prior warning when material is displayed or discussed.
- 6.4 Include the observance of NAIDOC week on the Avondale Academic calendar during semester.

7. EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURAL INITIATIVE

- 7.1 Honouring Biblical principles and the guidance of the Indigenous Consultative Committee, Avondale welcomes cultural initiatives that may include:
- Corroboree and song lines
 - Bush Tucker
 - Cultural dress
 - Indigenous artist-in-residence
 - Display of Indigenous artefact, including works of art and craft
 - Storytelling, including Indigenous languages

8. INDIGENOUS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

- 8.1 Composition of the Indigenous Consultative Committee:
- Representative from Senior Executive
 - ATSIM representative NNSW Conference

- ATSIM representative Greater Sydney Conference
- Indigenous Student Representative
- Indigenous Support personnel
- Representative from Awabakul people
- Representative from Kuringgai people

Table of amendments

Version Number	2.1	Replaces Version	2.0
Implementation Date	20 September 2018	Scheduled Review Date	
Approving Body	Executive Committee	Approval Date	20 September 2018
Policy Owner	Director, Student Life Services	Date first introduced	6 September 2011
Short description of amendment	<p>V2.1 <i>March 2023: updated branding, nomenclature and position titles, as relevant.</i></p> <p>V2.0 Full revision of the policy.</p>		