A FRAMEWORK FOR EMBEDDING
ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGES AND PERSPECTIVES AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER KNOWLEDGES AND PERSPECTIVES
IN CURRICULUM AT USC

Rise, and shine.
The University of the Sunshine Coast acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which its campuses sit. We recognise and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

A FRAMEWORK FOR EMBEDDING ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGES AND PERSPECTIVES AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER KNOWLEDGES AND PERSPECTIVES IN CURRICULUM AT USC

Background
The University of the Sunshine Coast recognises that respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, land, cultures and histories is critical to working together for better outcomes for all Australians and achieving our commitment to advance human rights within a tolerant and inclusive society.

The University is committed to providing all students with the opportunity to encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives as an integral part of their program of study. The principles contained in this framework are expressed within the curriculum in a range of USC programs and they have been an inherent part of the way that curriculum has been designed and provided to meet the expectations of staff, students and the professions associated with these programs. This framework provides a whole of University approach for broadening the scope of the embedding work to encompass all programs and therefore reach all students.

It is envisaged that through the adoption and implementation of this framework:

- USC graduates will be able to work effectively with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families to address matters of equity and social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- USC graduates will have developed this capacity by engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives within a discipline context.
- The University will benefit by attracting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, and building relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The commitment to this work is expressed in the University’s 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, Academic Plan, and the USC Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2017-2019. This framework is informed by a comprehensive review of available frameworks and guidelines for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in university curriculum, including those adopted by Universities Australia in 2011.

This framework consists of seven guiding principles and a set of institutional enablers that underpin successful implementation. It sets out various approaches to conducting the embedding work, and provides a matrix of student learning outcomes, scaffolded for both content and level. The whole of University action plan, which accompanies the framework, sets out the details of the activities to achieve the embedding work, including the timeframe and reporting progress.

The University acknowledges Gunggari digital artist Shannan Bishop for the use of her artwork for the front cover of this document. Ms Bishop graduated from a Bachelor of Computer-Based Design at the University of the Sunshine Coast in 2015.
Seven guiding principles

1. **Respectful collaboration:** Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives requires respectful collaboration between academic and professional staff, students, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Respectful collaboration acknowledges the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people alongside the shared responsibilities of all involved, particularly staff identified as sponsors to support the process, the professoriate, all senior staff of the University, program and discipline leaders.

2. **Recognition of diverse cultures:** Aboriginal nations have very diverse traditional and contemporary cultures and these differ markedly from those of the Torres Strait. The University respects these differences and embeds both Aboriginal knowledges and perspectives, and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives.

3. **Recognition and incorporation of multiple ways of knowing:** Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives requires valuing multiple ways of knowing, learning and being, and respecting the differences among and within Western and Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and being.

4. **Embrace complexity:** Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in curriculum requires recognition of diversity and dynamism, and the avoidance of binaries. This can be achieved by explicitly noting the sources of content, including information about the processes of knowledge production, ethical matters, protocols of ownership, and limits to generalisability.

5. **Ensure discipline alignment:** The University seeks a comprehensive approach to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in curriculum. The work will be undertaken at a program level to ensure thoughtful alignment with the discipline or professional knowledge bases and to avoid tokenistic inclusion of content.

6. **Draw on existing good practice models to achieve a coherent set of learning outcomes:** Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives is most effective when incorporated across a whole program, and is intentionally integrated and scaffolded for content and level learning outcomes. Good practice models exist at USC, within other institutions, and across the sector. This approach is consistent with the University's Coursework Curriculum Design - Academic Policy and related procedures.

7. **Implement appropriate pedagogy and assessment:** Effectively embedded and taught Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content can be seen as a threshold concept that creates transformative, integrative, troublesome and irreversible new ways of seeing understanding and using the relevant disciplinary or professional knowledge. Effective delivery of this content requires effective pedagogy (including innovative ICT-based approaches) to promote student engagement, minimise student resistance, and encourage collaborative, transformative learning. Assessment of this content will require appropriate formative and summative assessment strategies to encourage deep learning, integration of new insights across the program’s curriculum, and will develop the capacity to use new understandings for personal and professional purposes.
Set of institutional enablers

The following set of enablers underpin the successful implementation of the framework. Further details are contained in the Embedding Aboriginal Knowledges and Perspectives and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges and Perspectives in Curriculum at USC Action Plan.

- The embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in curriculum will be included as part of the University's policy and procedures framework and the University's Academic Plan.
- Faculties will be responsible for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in curriculum.
- Resources will need to be allocated to support the work. Such resources will include: appropriately qualified and experienced staff to work with colleagues at a school/discipline level and to liaise with Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors (within USC and beyond); and funds to create and establish a practice repository and teaching resources.
- A communication plan will be developed to promote the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in the curriculum to USC students, staff and the broader community.
- Progress will be monitored through annual summary reports from Faculties to Academic Board.

Approaches to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in curriculum.

The inventory of current USC practices which informed the development of this framework shows a variety of current practices. Some programs, particularly those with external professional accreditation requirements were more advanced in this process, and included significant content. Practically, considerations of the maturity of the embedding work for a given program and how best to achieve the identified learning outcomes will be made at the program level. Different approaches will be required to accommodate the various drivers for, and the stages of maturity of the practice across the University's curriculum. It is anticipated that with appropriate resourcing and support, the goals of this work will be realised between 2016 and 2022.

The action plan that accompanies this framework provides a detailed whole of University approach to embedding. Different program approaches may include:

- Acknowledge and showcase the work already achieved by programs who have embedded Aboriginal knowledges and perspectives and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives. These programs may consider the framework and action plan as an opportunity to consolidate and enhance current offerings.
- Assist programs and disciplines develop a plan to achieve the desired learning outcomes in a way that is appropriate for the program/discipline and is achievable within the identified timeframe of five years. It is important to note that the learning outcomes can be achieved through content embedded within existing discipline content, or as modules within courses, or consolidated within existing or new stand-alone courses.
- Support program coordinators to identify, adopt and adapt discipline-relevant models of good practice from within USC and other institutions.

It is anticipated that each program team will as part of their annual program review processes identify the content, level, assessment, and progression across the program using the learning outcomes matrix as a guide. Opportunities for ‘embedding’ would be identified and means to address these in ways consistent with the framework considered. This approach recognises that there will be very significant differences between programs and subsequent plans to achieve the desired outcomes.
Learning outcomes for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives

The following matrix of learning outcomes for undergraduate programs is proposed as a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Areas /Graduate Outcomes</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and contemporary practices</th>
<th>Cultural Competency, including building cultural capacity, knowledge and understanding of ‘race’ and racism</th>
<th>Personal and professional reflections and capacities for a socially just, intercultural world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory learning outcomes</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to explore, consider and explain...</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to recognise and identify...</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to identify, describe and interpret/deconstruct...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing learning outcomes</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to identify and consider key issues or concerns...</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to identify and analyse...</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to identify and consider and apply...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate learning outcomes</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to investigate and analyse...</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to identify and analyse...</td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to recognise, reflect, model, advocate and prioritise...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 1 provides an example showing how embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives could be achieved using this matrix.

Conclusion

The seven principles and set of enabling activities are designed to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives within USC programs. The principles are designed to guide the overall approach to the work, which requires program-appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, cultural competence and an understanding of race theories, and also support for all staff and students on their journey to foster cultural courage for personal and professional reflection, and a commitment to sustained and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It is anticipated that as the work progresses it will intersect with other University processes concerning governance, research, staffing and human resources, and community engagement and partnerships. These matters and other specific actions are detailed in the Action Plan, which will be reviewed and revised throughout the implementation of the framework from October 2016.
Notes

1 Use of terminology is contested and inconsistent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is preferred, but Indigenous is used when referencing many official documents and policies. No disrespect is intended by any of these usages and conventions.

2 It is important to maintain the unique and distinctive differences between Aboriginal knowledges and perspectives, and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives, which is reflected in the title. However, in this paper Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives is used for simplicity in presentation.

3 For further details on the background to this policy commitment, see: Background Paper (10/11/14), Rationale (21/01/15) and Themes and Approaches (10/12/15) documents prepared for the Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges and Perspectives in Curriculum Working Party, available at https://my.usc.edu.au/reporting-and-governance/academic-board/working-groups-and-consultation/eatskipc-resources-and-background


7 Almost two thirds of those course coordinators who responded to an email survey on existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, indicated a module or lecture or a reading or an assessment task, but these were often presented without specific context or explicit linkages to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content within the program. Often it was not part of the mandatory assessed course curriculum, and little is known about the pedagogy used to support such learning.


Table: Appendix 1: Template Learning Outcomes Matrix for Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Areas</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and contemporary practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introductory learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explore and consider demographic patterns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and key differences between these and other Australians today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explore and consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and their diversity before and after British settlement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Examine and explain overviews of the histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since settlement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explore/consider the contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to their own, the broader Australian and global communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify and consider key issues or concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are relevant to their particular discipline or profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Students have the opportunity to:</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Investigate and analyse examples of good practice by or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within their discipline or profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Investigate opportunities to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Cultural Competency, including building cultural capacity, knowledge and understanding of ‘race’ and racism.

**Students have the opportunity to:**
- Recognise that race is a social construction not a biological reality, and all people are racial beings or assigned a racial location
- Identify myths and false beliefs about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, why they exist and how to rebut them
- Recognise the role of all forms of media in the representation of race and identity

**Developing learning outcomes**

**Students have the opportunity to:**
- Identify and consider key issues or concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are relevant to their particular discipline or profession

**Graduate learning outcomes**

**Students have the opportunity to:**
- Investigate and analyse examples of good practice by or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within their discipline or profession
- Investigate opportunities to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

### Personal and professional reflections and capacities for a socially just, intercultural world

**Students have the opportunity to:**
- Recognise that race is a social construction not a biological reality, and all people are racial beings or assigned a racial location
- Identify myths and false beliefs about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, why they exist and how to rebut them
- Recognise the role of all forms of media in the representation of race and identity

**Students have the opportunity to:**
- Identify and analyse differing levels or forms of racism (individual, systemic, cultural and intrapersonal) and their impacts

**Students have the opportunity to:**
- Develop knowledge and skills to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, individuals and organizations
- Apply this knowledge to conduct research and work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in an ethical and respectful manner

**Students have the opportunity to:**
- Identify and analyse key theories of racism including white privilege and critical race theory, and examine ways to use this understanding to advance anti-racism

**Students have the opportunity to:**
- Recognise and reflect on ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives add to or complement existing knowledge and can interrogate and transform that knowledge
- Model and advocate a shared responsibility to combat racism and promote social justice, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and all Australians
- Prioritize collaborative and respectful ways of working together that are personally and professionally meaningful and effective