Responsible officer	Moderation and Inclusion Manager
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Approved by	Council
Responsible Body	Council
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Superseded documents	Nil
Related documents	Acknowledgement of Country Guidelines Coursework Course Enrolment Policy
Student Lifecycle Stage/s	All

1. PURPOSE

To ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander* students are supported in culturally appropriate ways, in a fair and inclusive academic environment free from racism and discrimination, and with resources and services which promote academic flourishing.

*Note: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples/First Nations Australians/Indigenous Australians use a wide range of terminology that is considered acceptable to name the populations as a whole.

2. DEFINITIONS

Definitions for any words in **Bold** in this document can be found in the Policy Glossary. The first instance of each defined term has been outlined in bold.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all self-identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who enrol in a course of study with the Australian University of Theology (AUT), and to staff, officers and volunteers of the AUT and Affiliated Colleges.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 The AUT affirms that all people are created in the image of God with sanctity and dignity (Gen 1:26-28) and therefore respect is due to every person (1 Peter 2:17).

4.2 The AUT considers racism and racial discrimination unacceptable and will not tolerate them under any circumstances.

4.3 The AUT is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by

4.3.1   promoting a diverse, equitable, inclusive and supportive learning environment;

4.3.2   raising awareness about issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

4.3.3   giving consideration to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

4.3.4   encouraging cultural awareness training for staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and;

4.3.5   respectfully and relationally engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

4.4 AUT and Affiliated College learning environments will seek to foster positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

4.5 The AUT Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country Guideline notes that *'Acknowledgement of Country' and 'Welcome to Country' recognise the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian culture and history. Incorporating Acknowledgement and Welcome into AUT events enables our wider community to share in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage, fostering respectful relationships and reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and other Australians.* The Guideline states that an *'Acknowledgement of Country' may be given at functions such as public and formal events, board meetings, conferences, public lectures, workshops, seminars, online conferences and events, and other special occasions for students and staff,* and *a 'Welcome to Country' may be given at major functions.*

5.   PRINCIPLES

5.1 The AUT shall appoint an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer.

5.2 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer will be:

a)   an available point of contact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who would like to speak to an AUT staff member or representative;

b)   the primary point of contact for Affiliated Colleges for any policy matter specifically pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and

c)   a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Group.

5.3 The AUT will convene an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Group to provide advice to AUT about culturally relevant and responsive support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

5.4 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Group will provide advice to AUT on the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

5.5 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Group shall provide advice to AUT on activities that build a sense of belonging and connection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

5.6 AUT and Affiliated College staff who work directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students shall be given opportunity to receive cultural awareness training and opportunities for ongoing professional development.

5.7 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Group shall provide advice to AUT in order to bring First Nations perspectives to reviews of learning environments to identify improvements for better supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

5.8 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Group will provide advice

to AUT on increasing awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches to theology. An outworking of this may be that members of the Group are invited to work in partnership with relevant AUT academics to develop content for units of study that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches to theology.

5.9 Informed by examples such as [The Gadigal Centre](), [Jumbunna]() and [Murrup Barak](), the AUT's support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will include three main areas of focus:

a) Pastoral care, including but not limited to care and support, and referral to appropriate services, e.g. counselling, health services, community services, etc.

b) Mentoring, including different aspects of student life, e.g. starting college, general wellbeing, building supportive (community and cultural) connections, academic goals, etc.

c) Academic support, including access to learning support and, where possible, one-on-one tutoring.

5.10 AUT will consider the range of factors influencing the attrition and non-completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

5.11 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer will oversee the distribution of AUT orientation material which provides information about the support program to all self-identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

5.12 All strategies, policy frameworks, activities, and initiatives pertaining specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, peoples, and communities will be regularly reviewed and improved, informed by the advice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Group.

6. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLAND CONSULTATION GROUP STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

6.1 The consultation group membership shall include representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, and staff of the AUT and Affiliated Colleges, especially Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff of the AUT and Affiliated Colleges.

6.2 The consultation group shall have a Chair who, where possible, is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, who leads each meeting; and an Executive Officer (currently the Moderation and Inclusion Manager), who will support the Chair by preparing agendas, documentation, and facilitating communication.

6.3 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer shall be a member of the consultation group.

6.4 The consultation group shall aim, where possible, to be constituted by a majority of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons.

6.5 Motions will be passed by a majority of members by email and/or by a majority at a face-to-face or online meeting.

6.6 The reference group shall aim to meet at least twice per year, with scope for performing business outside of the regular meetings by email.

6.7 The Higher Education Standards Framework shall inform meeting agendas and activities.

    6.7.1   Of the Higher Education Standards, particular attention will be given to Part A, Section 2.2, Diversity and Equity, which sets out three broad requirements for providers:

Institutional policies, practices and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds.

Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups are monitored and the findings are used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those subgroups.

6.8 The consultation group reports to the Council through the AUT Vice-Chancellor.

7. RELATED LEGISLATION

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)

8. REFERENCES

Australian Human Rights Commission, https://humanrights.gov.au/

The Gadigal Centre, The University of Sydney, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support and safe spaces - The University of Sydney

Indigenous Student Success Program, https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/education/indigenous-student-success-program

Jumbunna, University of Technology, Sydney, About Jumbunna | University of Technology Sydney (uts.edu.au)

Murrup Barak, The University of Melbourne, https://murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au/study/current-students/the-student-success-team#2080250

NCSEHE, Building the evidence to improve completion rates for Indigenous students, 2022, https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/improve-completion-rates-indigenous-students/

9. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	Board of Directors	19/08/2023	19/08/2023	New document
2	Vice-Chancellor	June 2025	June 2025	New policy format, minor editorial updates to implement university status.

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https://aut.edu.au/documents