



Indigenous Student Charter



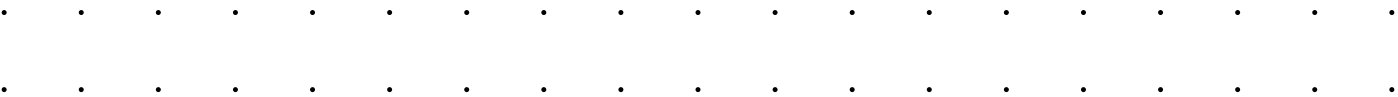
Acknowledgement of Country

Swinburne University of Technology respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which Swinburne's Australian campuses are located in Melbourne's east and outer-east, and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We are honoured to recognise our connection to Wurundjeri Country, history, culture and spirituality through these locations, and strive to ensure that we operate in a manner that respects and honours the Elders and Ancestors of these lands.

We also respectfully acknowledge Swinburne's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, alumni, partners and visitors.

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of lands across Australia, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures and heritage, and recognise the continuing sovereignties of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.



Indigenous Student Charter overview and purpose

The Swinburne University of Technology Indigenous Student Charter represents a collaborative effort shaped by Indigenous student perspectives. The Charter seeks to build a community where Indigenous students feel valued, respected, and supported in their educational pursuits.

The Moondani Toombadool Centre (MTC) encourages university staff to use this template to review the Charter and align their daily tasks with its principles. This review is an opportunity to integrate these principles into individual interactions and organisational practices, thereby contributing towards the university's strategic goals related to Indigenous engagement and reconciliation.

Laura-Anne Bull
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, Experience and Employability

Professor John Evans
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Engagement



Key principles of the Indigenous Student Charter

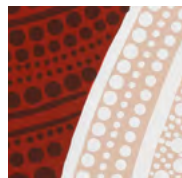


Being and Becoming

Swinburne staff recognise the knowledge and perspectives that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students bring to its academic environment. It acknowledges the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of Indigenous students and is committed to providing support throughout their educational journey in a manner that respects and embraces their cultural identities.

The university will:

- Enhance the Indigenous cultural competence of teaching and service delivery staff, ensuring that the recognition and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, languages and cultures is an everyday practice amongst the Swinburne community.
- Ensure student success centres on incorporating cultural strength and resilience with educational attainment and achievement by providing opportunities and platforms that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to exercise self-determination and empowerment.



Being and Belonging

Swinburne acknowledges the importance of nurturing a sense of belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It is dedicated to supporting and celebrating their unique contribution to the wider Swinburne community. The institution places a strong emphasis on cultivating an environment that encourages connectivity, inclusivity, and a profound sense of belonging.

The university will:

- Empower students by acknowledging their unique cultural identities as First Peoples, the diversity of First Nations societies and the relationships they have with Place and Country.
- Create and maintain culturally safe and inclusive places for Indigenous students to connect by celebrating their achievements and in receiving culturally appropriate services.



Cultural Responsiveness

The Swinburne community is dedicated to consistently promoting Indigenous cultural awareness, understanding, and respect among all members of the Swinburne community. The institution places a strong emphasis on the active promotion and engagement of Swinburne students and staff in cultural responsiveness.

The university will:

- Amplify Indigenous knowledges, cultures and educational approaches across learning, teaching, and assessment, ensuring First Nation perspectives and standpoints are respected and valued.
- Challenge and address racism, bias, and discrimination in all its forms, creating responsive and safe learning environments that support the unique needs and experiences of Indigenous students.



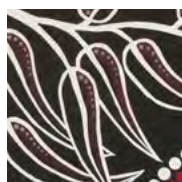
Indigenous Perspectives and Standpoints

Swinburne is dedicated to decolonising cultural practices and learning by incorporating Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and standpoints. The institution recognises the importance of challenging and dismantling colonial frameworks and practices to establish an equitable and inclusive learning environment for Indigenous students.

The university will:

- Provide a safe and respectful community that empowers students to share Indigenous perspectives, standpoints, cultural rights, and responsibilities.
- Respond to intergenerational trauma and resilience by building learning and teaching relationships that promote continuous learning, deep listening, and connection.

Principle one

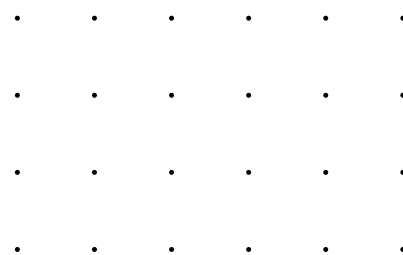
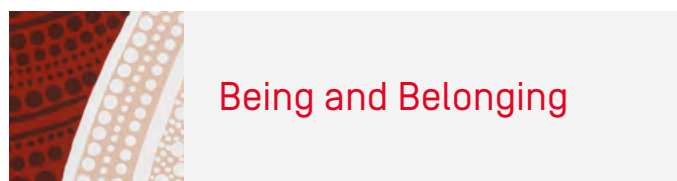


Being and Becoming

Being and Becoming focuses on embracing cultural diversity and recognising the unique cultural backgrounds and experiences of Indigenous students. Swinburne is committed to supporting the learning journey of Indigenous students in ways that are respectful and inclusive of their cultural identities. This principle acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are walking and navigating worlds and highlights the importance of fostering meaningful connections and relationships. Swinburne aims to elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, providing opportunities for them to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Aim	Actions
1.1 Ensure that the recognition and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures is an everyday practice amongst the Swinburne community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Indigenous events and important dates are highlighted in university calendars, diaries, and platforms to promote awareness and respect. • Celebrate Indigenous events and activities across media and communication channels to enhance visibility and engagement. • Provide opportunities for students to connect with Elders, participate in Moondani Toombadool Learning Circles, and attend cultural events celebrating Indigenous heritage. • Incorporate Indigenous materials and designs in enrolment merchandise, fostering cultural identity and a sense of belonging among students.
1.2 Provide opportunities and platforms that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to exercise self-determination and empowerment by having a choice and a voice in setting their goals and aspirations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote Indigenous representation on student councils and unions. • Facilitate Indigenous student representation on university committees related to governance, learning and teaching, and research. • Support the establishment of local and global Indigenous student councils to provide platforms for Indigenous students to voice their opinions and participate in decision-making processes.
1.3 Incorporate cultural strength and resilience with educational attainment and achievement centring on Indigenous student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove barriers for online, on campus, and On-Country Indigenous students by ensuring access to resources, support services, and cultural activities. • Collaborate with the MTC student services team to strengthen enrolment, retention, and success strategies for Indigenous students. • Increase staff awareness and use of the university's At Risk strategy, encouraging proactive engagement with the MTC student services team for students identified as at risk. • Embed Indigenous culture authentically within the curriculum and celebrate Indigenous achievements at graduations, sharing success stories to inspire current and future Indigenous students.
1.4 Enhance the Indigenous cultural competence of teaching and service delivery staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer and encourage ongoing training, such as Koorie Heritage Trust programs, to deepen staff understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories. • Require all higher education and Vocational Education and Training tutors and teaching staff to complete the Embracing Learning and Teaching Canvas module to integrate Indigenous perspectives into teaching practices. • Embed Indigenous cultural competence development into staff professional development plans to support continual learning. • Ensure the Acknowledgement of Country Canvas page is regularly updated and accessible to staff as a resource for acknowledging Indigenous cultures.

Principle two



Being and Belonging focuses on creating a sense of community and connectedness for Indigenous students at Swinburne. This principle emphasises the importance of providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, both physically and online. Swinburne aims to foster a sense of belonging by empowering students to celebrate their cultural identity and providing opportunities for them to connect with their communities. The university recognises the significance of creating a supportive and inclusive space where Indigenous students can thrive and feel a sense of belonging within the Swinburne community.

Aim	Actions
2.1 Embed cultural responsiveness and respect for Country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an online cultural competency module for all Swinburne students, encouraging completion in their first semester. • Integrate the Student Indigenous Cultural Competency module into learning, teaching, and assessment activities for teaching staff. • Include an Acknowledgement of Country section in student assessment templates, encouraging students to incorporate this acknowledgement in their work. • Encourage staff and students to add an Acknowledgement of Country in email signatures and Microsoft Teams profiles to show respect for Place and Country.
2.2 Enable cultural identity and culturally safe spaces and experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate and promote opportunities for Indigenous students to engage in study tours or field trips connecting them to local Indigenous communities, culture, and Country. • Conduct regular cultural audits of physical spaces to incorporate Indigenous artwork, signage, and culturally significant elements to ensure they are welcoming and safe. • Create online platforms fostering inclusion and connection for Indigenous students, allowing for the sharing of cultural knowledge. • Ensure Student Support Services embrace First Peoples' cultural diversity in service delivery, and work actively to eliminate racial discrimination across the university.
2.3 Empower connections with the Moondani Toombadool Centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the services and resources of MTC as a supportive and culturally safe hub for Indigenous students. • Collaborate with MTC to develop programs, workshops, and events celebrating Indigenous culture and fostering a sense of belonging. • Enhance the physical spaces of MTC to reflect Indigenous cultural values, creating a welcoming environment for Indigenous students. • Provide Indigenous students with opportunities for storytelling, yarning circles, and cultural sharing sessions through MTC.
2.4 Encourage cultural reflection and connection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate mindfulness and reflective practices into the curriculum, supporting students in connecting with themselves and their surroundings. • Offer workshops or training on active listening and empathy to staff and students, enhancing their understanding and connection with Indigenous communities. • Provide spaces for Indigenous students to share their stories and experiences, promoting deep listening, self-reflection, and connection within the broader university community.

Principle three



Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural Responsiveness highlights the significance of developing cultural competency and understanding to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment for Indigenous students. Swinburne recognises the importance of incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices into the curriculum and broader university community. It emphasises the need for cultural awareness training for all staff and students, fostering an environment where cultural diversity is celebrated and respected.

Swinburne is committed to promoting cultural responsiveness across all aspects of the institution. This principle requires an ongoing commitment to learning and growth, encouraging staff and students to continuously challenge and address systemic inequalities and biases.

Aim	Actions
3.1 Integrate Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide professional development for teaching staff on Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives.• Incorporate Indigenous content and perspectives across teaching programs, learning materials, and assessments.• Engage with Wurundjeri, Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander Elders and knowledge keepers to guide curriculum development, ensuring Indigenous knowledge is central.• Include Indigenous perspectives in course materials, resources, discussions, and assessments, valuing First Nations contributions across all academic disciplines.
3.2 Create and maintain culturally responsive and inclusive learning environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster inclusive classrooms that respect and incorporate Indigenous students' perspectives, experiences, and unique ways of learning.• Maintain tailored academic support services for Indigenous students, such as tutoring and mentoring.• Implement anti-racism and cultural capability training for staff and students, and create protocols for reporting and addressing incidents of racism or discrimination.• Develop policies to eliminate cultural bias, ensuring culturally responsive practices are embedded across the learning environment.
3.3. Strengthen Indigenous cultural engagement and community connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organise cultural activities and workshops, such as ceremonies and language classes, to strengthen connections with Indigenous cultures.• Facilitate On-Country visits for students, providing direct experiences with Indigenous communities.• Champion Indigenous student-led cultural events and initiatives, and offer resources and spaces for these projects.• Develop partnerships with Indigenous businesses, industry, and communities, providing mentorships, guest lectures, and work-integrated learning opportunities.
3.4 Develop resources and expectations for support services for Indigenous students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure staff selection processes recognise both professional skills and Indigenous cultural competencies.• Increase access to a diverse range of Indigenous resources, including books, videos, and other educational materials.• Maintain culturally sensitive support services for Indigenous students, including culturally grounded counselling services.• Promote networking, mentorship, and career development programs for Indigenous students, offering connections with Indigenous professionals across industries.

Principle four



Indigenous Perspectives and Standpoints

Indigenous Perspectives and Standpoints highlights the significance of understanding and respecting cultural differences, as well as acknowledging the impact of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous communities. Swinburne provides opportunities for Indigenous students to share their cultural knowledge, connect with their communities, and promote cultural protection.

This principle recognises the historical and ongoing impact of colonisation on Indigenous communities and commits to creating opportunities for students and staff to learn about Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives in a manner that is respectful and inclusive. Swinburne has made a commitment to developing and implementing strategies that promote a decolonised approach to learning, aiming to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures among the university community.

By embracing Indigenous Perspectives and Standpoints, Swinburne seeks to create an environment that values and respects the rich diversity of Indigenous cultures, knowledge systems, and ways of being. Through these efforts, the university aims to promote reconciliation, challenge existing power structures, and create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for Indigenous students.

Aim	Actions
4.1 Provide a safe and respectful environment for Indigenous cultural engagement (without disruption).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen policies through Indigenous Business Action Plans and the Reconciliation Action Plan to support safe and respectful cultural sharing.• Establish designated spaces and events where Indigenous students can share cultural knowledge and traditions.• Implement cultural sensitivity training for staff and students to ensure respectful engagement.
4.2 Facilitate open dialogue, feedback, and cultural rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop feedback mechanisms for students to share experiences, address barriers, and foster meaningful dialogue between students, staff, and administration.• Ensure student feedback informs improvements to Indigenous student experiences and addresses challenges.• Promote Indigenous intellectual and cultural rights, incorporating knowledge of cultural appropriation through orientation and curriculum resources, and consulting Elders in Residence and cultural advisors.
4.3 Build supportive relationships and address intergenerational trauma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide Indigenous Cultural Competency training for staff focused on understanding intergenerational trauma and Indigenous resilience.• Fund support services, including culturally sensitive counselling and mentorship, to meet the specific needs of Indigenous students.• Engage in reciprocal and meaningful relationships with Indigenous students, prioritising deep listening and supporting their educational journey.
4.4 Support cultural growth, career development, and future aspirations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with local Indigenous communities, organisations, and businesses to create projects, placements, and career pathways that benefit Indigenous students.• Develop memorandums of understanding with Indigenous communities and industry partners to support professional placement and career aspirations.• Support Indigenous student-led organisations and initiatives with resources, funding, and mentorship, and create pathways to further education and career opportunities.



Guiding documents

Swinburne's Indigenous Student Charter is guided by several key documents that underpin the university's commitment to promoting inclusivity, cultural diversity, and reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

The **United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples** sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that Indigenous peoples around the world should be entitled to, including the right to self-determination, the preservation of cultures, and access to education. This document serves as an important framework for institutions, like Swinburne, that seek to promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity in their policies and practices.

Swinburne's Charter of Cultural Diversity recognises the importance of cultural diversity and promotes inclusiveness, mutual respect, and social cohesion. This Charter affirms the university's commitment to foster an environment that supports the cultural identities of its Indigenous students and staff.

Swinburne's Reconciliation Action Plan outlines the university's commitments to reconciliation. This document sets out specific actions that the university will take to build relationships, show respect, and create opportunities for Indigenous peoples. It is an ongoing process that involves collaboration with First Nation communities and stakeholders.

The Indigenous Student Charter aligns with **Swinburne Horizon 2025** by fostering a culturally safe and inclusive learning environment, integrating Indigenous knowledges, promoting diversity and inclusion, and nurturing relationships with Indigenous communities. It demonstrates Swinburne's commitment to addressing societal challenges, promoting equity, and creating transformative educational experiences for Indigenous students.

Finally, the **Moondani Toombadool Indigenous Learning and Teaching Strategy** is an integral part of Swinburne's commitment to increasing Indigenous engagement and success at the university, while promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures, and educational approaches.

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Acknowledgements

The Indigenous Student Charter acknowledges the student contribution in building and reviewing this document including student-led roundtable and yarning sessions facilitated through:

- Violet Dreaming: a co-design process involving MTC and Indigenous students to create a safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive space on campus.
- Swinburne's Student Union
- National Centre for Reconciliation of Practice: a centre dedicated to promoting and supporting reconciliation and Indigenous engagement in higher education.
- Swinburne Indigenous Governance Committee
- Staff and community members from the Moondani Toombadool Centre: a transformational leader grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, which provides support, resources, and cultural programs for Indigenous students.

For further information regarding Indigenous Students and Services go to:

Indigenous Student Services



Acceptable terminology

First Nations: Used to describe global Indigenous communities and is increasingly used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Specific Nations: When discussing specific Nations, refer to them by name, e.g. 'Wurundjeri People'. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also use broad terms to refer to large geographical regions, such as 'Koorie' in Victoria. Always seek confirmation with the Nation to ensure they are comfortable with the broader term.

Plural forms: Use plural forms like 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' to acknowledge the diversity within these communities.

Respectful communication: Ensure that all staff, students, and representatives of the university use inclusive language when conducting university business.





Indigenous Student Charter Artwork

Awabakal – Michelle Searle

The story of this painting named Awabakal is underpinned by the four principles of the Indigenous Student Charter, which are expressed as four message sticks holding the knowledges of Being and Becoming, Being and Belonging, Cultural Responsiveness, and Indigenous Perspectives and Standpoints.

The emu and kangaroo tracks on the message sticks represent the students' journey forward mimicking the gait of the emu and kangaroo as they are both only able to walk forward.

The manna gum leaves represent our connection to land, the beautiful lands of the Wurundjeri people.

The circle supporting the message sticks represents the coming together to listen and learn to share, building strong relationships and understanding the importance of a diverse range of cultural knowledge and perspectives that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students bring.

The red space represents the importance of nurturing a sense of belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their connections to Mother Earth. The different surrounding dots are supportive of the unique relationship with the wider Swinburne community encouraging connectivity, inclusivity, and a profound sense of belonging.

The tree symbolises a holistic way of teaching and shared ways of being connected. It incorporates growth and an inclusive learning environment.

The journey pathway across the painting represents the students' journey, their ways of walking together and respectful shared connections. The circles along the pathways promote active participation and engagement through empowering self-confidence, courage, resilience, and strength along their pathways to success.

Contact the Moondani Toombadool Centre

✉ indigenousstudents@swinburne.edu.au

🌐 swinburne.edu.au/indigenous

📷 [instagram.com/mtcswinburne](https://www.instagram.com/mtcswinburne)

The information contained in this brochure was correct at the time of publication, January 2025. The university reserves the right to alter or amend the material contained in this guide.

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