



Indigenous Education
and Research Centre

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STATEMENT (IES) 2025-2030

Creating a Brighter Future for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Peoples



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Executive Summary

This Indigenous Education Strategy positions JCU as a national leader in Indigenous education, embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities across **Our People**, **Our Place**, **Our Education**, and **Our Research**. Aligned with Commonwealth funding requirements and JCU's strategic priorities, this strategy commits to measurable outcomes, including 1,000 Indigenous student enrolments and 10 additional Indigenous academic staff by 2027, while ensuring Indigenous knowledge systems strengthen our identity as a civic university serving the tropics and beyond.

Key Commitments:

- Achieve sector-leading Indigenous student participation and completion rates
- Embed Indigenous knowledge across the disciplines
- Expand Indigenous-led research capacity and community partnerships
- Build a diverse Indigenous workforce reflecting our communities
- Integrate Indigenous priorities into core university operations

Acknowledgement

This strategy recognises that Indigenous priorities at JCU are everybody's business—woven into our institutional identity and shared across all levels, roles, and units of our university community.



Image by James Cook University
The Engineering and Innovation building lit up at night with a purple sky behind Dec 2024

Our Strategic Context

Purpose Alignment

This strategy directly advances JCU's purpose: **Creating a brighter future for life in the tropics and beyond, through education and research that makes a difference locally and globally.** Indigenous peoples are central to this mission, not only as beneficiaries but as co-creators of knowledge, drivers of institutional excellence, and leaders of transformative change.



Image by Indigenous Education and Research Centre
Cultural Sashing Ceremony Dec 2024

Strategic Priority Integration

Our Indigenous commitments strengthen each of JCU's five strategic priorities:

- **Transformative Education:** Indigenous Student Success and Indigenous Studies scholarship
- **Impactful Research:** Indigenous-led research addressing community priorities
- **Empowering Our People:** Indigenous workforce development and cultural capability to work with Indigenous communities
- **A Civic University:** Community partnerships and regional engagements
- **Securing Our Future:** Sustainable investment in Indigenous education excellence

Our Commitments: Four Strategic Pillars



Pillar 1: Indigenous Access, Participation and Student Success

Delivering on Our Education – Knowledge has the power to change lives



Pillar 2: Indigenous Knowledges and Curriculum

Embedding Indigenous Knowledge across Our Education



Pillar 3: Indigenous Research Excellence

Advancing Our Research through Indigenous Knowledge and Leadership



Pillar 4: Indigenous Employment and Leadership

Building Our People to Reflect the Communities We Serve



*Image by Indigenous Education and Research Centre
JCU Nguma-bada (Cairns) Academic Support Advisor with students 2025*

Pillar 1: Indigenous Access, Participation and Student Success

Delivering on Our Education - Knowledge has the power to change lives



Image by Indigenous Education and Research Centre
JCU Bebegu Yumba (Townsville) Welcome to Orientation at the IERC 2025

Our commitment: JCU will be the university of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, delivering exceptional outcomes through education that is responsive to communities in our region.

Performance Targets 2025-2030:

- 1,000 Indigenous student enrolments by 2030 (aligned with university KPI)
- Indigenous retention rates exceeding sector benchmarks
- Indigenous completion rates of 70% by 2030
- 90% of Indigenous graduates employed within 6 months

Strategic Actions:

- Expand targeted outreach and pathway programs across our regions
- Implement hyper-personalised support systems for Indigenous students
- Strengthen retention and completion through our unique services for Indigenous students
- Leverage Commonwealth funding (ISSP, HEPPP, ABSTUDY) for maximum impact
- Embed Indigenous priorities across all programs

Pillar 2: Indigenous Knowledges and Curriculum

Embedding Indigenous Knowledge across Our Education



*Image by Indigenous Education and Research Centre
Ninth Annual Indigenous Students' Awards Night 2025*

Our commitment: All JCU graduates will have access to courses on Indigenous knowledge systems, histories, and contemporary contributions to their fields of study.

Performance Targets 2025-2030:

- 100% of Indigenous Studies courses available online by 2028
- Indigenous Studies enrolments increased by 50% by 2028
- Student satisfaction with Indigenous curriculum content >85%
- 2 online Degree programs specifically for Indigenous communities by 2027

Strategic Actions:

- Establish IERC's Indigenous Studies (minor and major sequence) as the University's flagship for students in undergraduate programs by 2027
- Create Indigenous Studies pathways and specialisations for all students
- Support Indigenous-led curriculum design and delivery of courses in Indigenous communities
- Develop innovative pedagogies reflecting the cultural interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems
- Integrate with JCU's signature pedagogy and AI-enhanced learning approaches to multi-modal forms of learning

Pillar 3: Indigenous Research Excellence

Advancing Our Research through Indigenous knowledge and leadership



*Image by Indigenous Education and Research Centre
JCU Bebegu Yumba (Townsville) HDR Workshop 2025*

Our commitment: JCU will be recognised for Indigenous-led research excellence that creates real-world impact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Performance Targets 2025-2030:

- 10 Indigenous research staff by 2030 (aligned with the university KPI)
- 50 Indigenous HDR enrolments over the strategy period
- \$5M in Indigenous-specific research funding secured
- 100% of research partnerships include Indigenous governance and clear commitments to community capacity building

Strategic Actions:

- Increase Indigenous HDR enrolment and early-career researcher development
- Establish Indigenous research networks across priority areas
- Ensure ethical, community-controlled research partnerships
- Support Indigenous knowledge co-production and benefit-sharing
- Integrate with JCU's research priority areas (health, environment, sustainability)

Pillar 4: Indigenous Employment and Leadership

Building Our People to reflect the communities we serve



*Image by Indigenous Education and Research Centre
JCU Bebegu Yumba (Townsville) staff 2025*

Our commitment: JCU's workforce will reflect the diversity of our regions, with Indigenous staff in leadership roles across academic and professional streams.

The Indigenous Workforce Strategy 2021-2025 at James Cook University aimed to achieve an Indigenous employment rate of 4.68% of JCU's total workforce. The table below shows JCU achieved 3.86%, just shy of the target.

Indigenous Percentage (%) Ratio (Excluding Casuals)										
Division	2021 Baseline (Projectio) same as 2020 actual	2021 Actual (End of Year)	2022 Target	2022 Actual (End of Year)	2023 Target	2023 Actual (End of Year)	2024 Target	2024 Actual (End of Year)	2025 Target	2025 Actual (End of Year)
Academy Division	2.05%	2.16%	2.47%	2.04%	2.89%	2.21%	3.30%	2.70%	3.72%	3.42%
Research Division	0.47%	0.54%	0.71%	0.94%	0.94%	0.99%	1.18%	1.27%	1.41%	2.92%
Education Division	2.16%	1.96%	2.70%	2.75%	3.24%	1.75%	3.78%	1.54%	4.31%	1.56%
Services Division	0.76%	0.73%	1.72%	0.78%	2.67%	0.67%	3.62%	0.96%	4.58%	0.86%
Chancellery	14.52%	16.84%	15.48%	17.34%	16.44%	18.24%	17.40%	18.10%	18.36%	20.18%
JCU Total	2.58%	2.76%	3.11%	2.82%	3.63%	2.96%	4.15%	3.25%	4.68%	3.86%

Performance Targets 2025-2030:

- An additional 10 FTE Indigenous academic staff by 2030 (aligned with university KPI)
- Indigenous staff representation increased across all classification levels
- 100% of staff complete cultural capability development

Strategic Actions:

- Implement targeted Indigenous recruitment across all levels
- Create clear career progression pathways and mentoring programs
- Build institution-wide cultural capability and inclusive practices
- Establish Indigenous leadership development initiatives
- Recognise and reward Indigenous contributions

Implementation Framework

Governance & Leadership

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Education & Strategy	Indigenous Advisory Committee to the Vice-Chancellor	Indigenous Management Team
Executive leadership and institutional oversight	Community voice and cultural guidance	Operational implementation and coordination
Direct reporting to the Vice-Chancellor on strategy progress	Annual strategy review and recommendations	Indigenous funding prioritisation and acquittal
Strategic resource allocation and priority setting	Accountability for cultural protocols and community engagement	Cross-university collaboration and integration

Resource Allocation

Indigenous priorities are embedded in JCU's resource allocation model, with dedicated Strategic Investment funding supporting transformational initiatives. Annual budget allocations will prioritise Indigenous education, research, and employment outcomes while leveraging Commonwealth funding streams.

Integration with University Operations

- Indigenous KPIs integrated into Corporate Performance Measures
- Indigenous outcomes embedded in College and Directorate annual action plans
- Indigenous priorities reflected in recruitment, promotion, and recognition systems
- Cultural protocols embedded in university policies and procedures

Our Monitoring and Evaluation Structure

Performance Framework

Our monitoring system aligns with JCU's Corporate Performance Measures while meeting Commonwealth funding requirements:

Annual Reporting	Continuous Improvement
Student access, participation, retention, and completion data	Quarterly progress reviews with the Indigenous Advisory Committee
Research outputs, funding, and community impact metrics	Annual external evaluation and community feedback
Employment and workforce development progress	Integration with university planning and review cycles
Community engagement and partnership outcomes	Transparent public reporting on commitments and achievements

Success Measures

Progress will be measured through both quantitative targets and qualitative outcomes:

- **Lead Indicators:** Enrolment growth, staff recruitment, research applications
- **Lag Indicators:** Completion rates, graduate outcomes, research impact
- **Community Measures:** Satisfaction, cultural safety, self-determination outcomes



Cover image by Brian Robinson
Between the Moon and the Stars 2020

Our Commitment to Leadership

James Cook University commits to being a national leader in Indigenous education through:

Accountability	Regular public reporting and community engagement
Innovation	Leading practice in Indigenous curriculum and research
Partnership	Genuine collaboration with Indigenous communities
Investment	Sustained funding aligned with institutional priorities
Excellence	Sector-leading outcomes for Indigenous students and staff

This strategy recognises that our success as a civic university serving the tropics depends on the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. By embedding Indigenous priorities across Our People, Our Place, Our Education, and Our Research, we honour our commitment to creating a brighter future for all.

Prepared by: Professor Martin Nakata, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education & Strategy

Approved: 9 July 2025

Review Date: Annual review, major revision 2028

Version: 1.0

This strategy aligns with the National Indigenous Australians Agency funding requirements, Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy, and JCU’s Integrated Dynamic Plan 2025.



*Image by Indigenous Education and Research Centre
Doing things better means doing something different 2025*