

Indigenous Education & Research Centre Plan

2020-2022

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The Indigenous Education and Research Centre's Plan at James Cook University is to increase the number of Indigenous students participating in higher education studies, and to provide them the cultural and academic support needed to progress and complete courses that lead to a higher education award. This Plan, along with our plans to deliver Indigenous Studies courses to all students, will be achieved in alignment with the priorities set down in the [University Plan \(2018-2022\)](#).

Our Mission

JCU is acknowledged internationally for excellence in research and teaching in areas of specific importance to the Tropics and underserved regions, and plays a vital role in developing graduates who are equipped and excited to work and live in rural, remote and Indigenous communities throughout northern Australia and the broader Tropics. A key part of our mission is to create a brighter future for life in the tropics worldwide through graduates and discoveries that make a difference.

People and Place

The context in which we operate is transforming, impacted by increased competition for students and resources, changing expectations of universities, advances in digital technology, and globalisation. This sets out how we intend to anticipate and respond to the contemporary challenges we face, while continuing to deliver on the promise we made to our local communities 50 years ago to provide education and research relevant to the needs of northern Australia and the wider Tropics.

Connecting, Locally and Globally

The needs of our student cohort are central to JCU's mission, and creating an environment that fosters a positive learning experience for our students is everybody's business. We seek to know our student cohort and welcome them into an inclusive and accessible space that embraces diversity and champions respect. We will engage our students in a supportive community of higher learning through an outstanding academic, social and cultural campus experience that equips them to make a significant contribution to local, national and global communities.

Development, More Sustainably

We are committed to the principles of sustainability. We will ensure that our actions today do not limit the range of social, cultural, environmental and economic options open to future generations. We are a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and have agreed to play our role as a university in understanding and responding to challenges facing the world.

Our Academic Aspirations

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James Cook University's Plan (2018-2022) is to create and sustain opportunities for those living in the Tropics to participate in further education and contribute to the community, the global workforce and the attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Our role is to develop graduates who have the disciplinary and generic knowledge, skills, attributes and disposition to be successful in an employment market that is becoming increasingly knowledge based, automated and globalized. To achieve this our programs will enable students to be adaptable and acquire the digital literacy, intercultural communication, collaboration, career management, innovation and entrepreneurial skills required to succeed within complex career landscapes of the future.

Focus on the needs of our students: We will engage our students in a supportive community of higher learning through an outstanding academic, social and cultural campus experience that equips them to make a significant contribution to local, national and global communities.

Learning and Teaching: We will inspire students and the wider community about the importance of the Tropics and underserved populations. We will invest in areas of demonstrated strength and in new areas of strategic importance to focus attention and bring benefits to the communities we serve and enrich the learning experience of our students through exposure to, and involvement with, research.

Research: We will be a catalyst for innovation and connection, using international networks, research with impact and continuous learning opportunities to connect northern Australia to the global economy.

Connected to community: We will engage with communities, industry and the professions in the tropics worldwide, and be recognised and acknowledged as a leading international university for and of the tropics.

Culturally informed. Our students gain a knowledge and understanding of the importance of culture to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other Indigenous people living in the Tropics.

Our Plan

To achieve the University's Mission, the Indigenous Education and Research Centre will:

- create an inspiring and supportive environment on campus that celebrates the heritage, diversity and achievements of Indigenous people;

- assist Indigenous students to confidently participate in the academic and cultural life of the University;
- deliver a smarter learning support agenda that progresses Indigenous students through to completion of degree programs;
- adopt a progressive curriculum agenda that prepares all students to navigate the complexities of contemporary Indigenous situations in the tropics;
- design educational experiences that deliver an outstanding experience for all students, with exposure to research, and an engaging campus life; and
- engage in high quality research, intellectual scholarship, and research training in ways that enhance the traditional knowledge of Indigenous people and sustainable living practices for the tropics.

The Centre Plan will prioritise its work in the following areas.

1. Student Progression & Completion

Key Objective

Provide high quality, tailored learning support services to enhance Indigenous students' capacity to complete their studies successfully.

Key Activities

The Centre will work strategically with the Colleges to:

Reinvigorate pathway programs for Indigenous students from Year 10 to Year 12, and develop Special Entry pathways with the Colleges for mature-age enrolments.

Build upon existing outreach programs to engage Indigenous school students in STEM agendas appropriate to disciplines and degrees offered at the University.

Improve the pastoral and learning support services for students to better address the capacity issues of Indigenous students and enable them to become independent learners.

Implement Individual Learning Support Plans and specialised learning support services to achieve higher course completion rates.

Improve the number of scholarships for full-time students.

Build capacity of student support staff in regular workshops to deliver the learning support services.

Adopt early intervention strategies across campus to encourage academic persistence.

Improve data analytics to monitor and track students from their early outreach activities to completion of degrees.

Ensure tutoring services for students were available from the beginning of each semester.

Host and attend conferences on innovative learning support services and strategies for Indigenous students, publish leading scholarship papers in academic learning support areas in national and international journals and anthologies.

Key Outcome Areas

- a. Achieve progression rates of Indigenous students at levels equal to the sector average for all students.
- b. Achieve completion rates of Indigenous students at levels higher than the sector average for Indigenous students.
- c. Achieve participation rates of Indigenous students in STEM disciplines at levels higher than the sector average for Indigenous students.
- d. Provide financial support to at least 75% of Indigenous students enrolled at the University.

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2. Learning & Teaching

Key Objective

Design high quality curriculum engagements and teaching strategies that prepare future graduates to work effectively with Indigenous communities in the tropics.

Key Activities

The Centre will continue to:

Improve its Minor and Major sequence in an Australian Indigenous Studies suite for the Tropics so that it can be accessed by students from all disciplines in the Colleges.

Improve its Comparative Indigenous Studies subject on the international colonial experience.

Improve its Master of Philosophy (Indigenous) program for HDR students with Indigenous topics.

Design and develop more Signature Subjects, in collaboration with the Colleges of the Academic Divisions and Indigenous communities, to demonstrate how the utilisation of Indigenous community issues in the tropics can enhance degree qualifications.

Improve capacity of teaching staff through regular workshops to deliver new learning & teaching programs.

Host conferences on the teaching of Australian Indigenous Studies in the tropics and international conferences on the Scholarship in Comparative Indigenous Studies to ensure IERC teaching areas are concurrent with the emerging scholarship.

Publish leading scholarship papers in the teaching of Indigenous Studies in national and international journals and books.

Key Outcomes

- a. Achieve 600 Indigenous and non-Indigenous enrolments in the Centre's Indigenous Studies program each year.
- b. Achieve a fully articulated degree pathway at the Centre for students from undergraduate levels through to PhD levels.
- c. Achieve three Signature Subjects in the Colleges that can enhance the preparation of graduates to work in Indigenous communities.

3. Research

Key Objective

Undertake and support high quality, leading-edge research agendas at the Centre and in the Colleges of the academic divisions to directly benefit the Indigenous communities of the tropics.

Key Activities

The Centre will continue to:

Submit bids through nationally competitive funding schemes for projects that benefit the Indigenous communities in the tropics.

Collaborate and support researchers in the Colleges to achieve nationally competitive funds for projects that benefit Indigenous communities.

Compete for international grants in areas that enhance research engagements with Indigenous communities.

Obtain funds to support a cohort of 10 Indigenous PhD candidates and 4 Post-Doc Fellows.

Run grant-writing sessions for early career and Post-Doctoral Fellows with topics that involve Indigenous communities.

Offer Master classes to support all researchers with Indigenous topics.

Provide ongoing support for supervisors of students with Indigenous topics.

Arrange HDR student workspaces and scholarly environments at the Centre to grow our own capacity and sustain research careers at the University.

Host research conferences/symposia/events for national and international researchers working in the tropics.

Publish leading scholarship papers on funded research projects in national and international journals, anthologies & books.

Key Outcomes

- a. Achieve \$500K of grants received by the Centre each year.

- b. Achieve \$1M of grants received by the Colleges each year.
- c. Achieve funding for 10 PhD stipends and 4 Post-Doc Fellows.
- d. Achieve higher rates of publication in top tier journals.

4. Connected to Community

Key Objective

Engage Indigenous communities and their organisations on projects that can enhance self-determination agendas to improve their communities.

Key Activities

The Centre will work with the Colleges to:

Establish working relations with Indigenous communities, their leaders and their development plans to enable access to the scientific expertise at the University.

Collaborate with Indigenous communities and their leaders to enhance the University's curriculum areas and research projects.

Engage industry leaders to collaborate on projects that benefit Indigenous communities in the tropics.

Cooperate with government agencies to assist the national campaign to 'close the gap' in education, health and employment areas.

Organise an annual two-day celebratory event with a Gala evening on campus to recognise the achievements of students and staff who collaborate with Indigenous communities and industry partners.

Establish a monthly bulletin for the Indigenous communities to keep them informed of the collaborative engagements, achievements and activities between communities, industry and JCU.

Publish website information on strategic community engagements to encourage further engagements with Indigenous communities in the tropics.

Key Outcomes

- a. Achieve three Signature projects between Indigenous communities, industry and the University that can markedly improve opportunities for Indigenous people.
- b. Achieve three Signature Subjects in the Colleges that enhance the preparation of graduates to work in Indigenous communities.
- c. Achieve an annual 2-day event on campus to celebrate the University effort across campus to advance the interests of the Indigenous people of the tropics.

5. Indigenous Employment

Key Objective

Assist the progress of the University's commitment to the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2015-2020.

Key Activities

The Centre will work with HR to:

Establish a traineeship, internship, cadetship program in professional and academic areas with industry partners and the University.

Obtain resources to support a minimum cohort of 10 PhD candidates and 4 Post-Doctoral Fellows each year.

Establish a Professional Development budget for Indigenous staff and career progression.

Engage all Division leaders to provide opportunities for Indigenous staff rotation through their areas of responsibilities to broaden their skills and knowledge of the University.

Establish annual Spirit awards for staff members across the University who have demonstrated innovative processes on campus or with industry partners to benefit Indigenous students or their communities.

Create an Employment page on the Centre's website to feature professional and academic staff and online distribution arrangements with Indigenous networks for posting jobs of interest to students and staff on and off campus.

Participate in the Reference Group, and be accountable to the Goals of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2015-2020.

Publish annual achievements in Centre reports and make available on the Centre's website for viewing by the Indigenous communities.

Key Outcomes

a. A concerted University-wide Graduate Program, for growing our own Indigenous undergraduate and postgraduate students, that leads to employment and career progression.

b. Achieve funding to sustain an annual cohort of 10 PhD candidates and 4 Post-Doc Fellows from 2018.

c. Achieve 10 internship, cadetships and traineeships funded by the University and Industry partners for Indigenous students from 2016.

6. The Office of PVC Indigenous Education & Engagement

Key Objective

Work with DVCs to achieve genuine and sustainable reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and the wider community.

Key Activities

The PVC will work closely with DVCs to:

Create a university environment where Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and members of the wider campus community, work, study and live together with mutual respect and understanding.

Foster an environment where all students and staff feel safe and valued, regardless of their background.

Recognise and value cultural diversity as an asset that enriches the life of the university community.

Incorporate Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and cultures within the physical structures and spaces of the University.

Assist the work against racism and prejudice by highlighting university policies, providing an accessible complaints process, and by educating all students and staff about issues of racism, equity and equal opportunity.

Ensure Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, perspectives and experience are integrated in the curriculum areas.

Key Outcomes

- a. Become a culturally safe and supportive environment for all students and staff at the University.
- b. Become the leading learning support provider for Indigenous higher education in Australia.
- c. Become the place to enrol in Australia for Indigenous HDR and PhD studies.
- d. Become the Employer of choice for Indigenous people in the higher education sector.
- e. Be known nationally and internationally for research collaborations with industry, governments, and Indigenous communities that lead to marked and systemic improvements to Indigenous people's lives.

Quality Assurance

The quality of the Centre's programs and services will be assured by:

- Building up the capacity of Centre staff to enhance the services provided to students

- reviewing and supporting individual staff capabilities and performance areas on a monthly basis.
- reviewing and improving the performance of each section of the Centre annually against the commitments in this Plan.
- commissioning an external review of the Centre's performance against the planned priorities in 2022.
- publishing annual achievements and review findings for public viewing in the online environment.

Benchmarks

The Centre's progress and achievements will be measured against:

- the commitments made by the University
- the national effort to close the educational gaps
- the number of graduates returned to Indigenous communities

And compared against achievements of:

- the Indigenous Centres in Queensland
- the Indigenous Education Centres of the IRU network universities
- the Indigenous Centres in G8 universities, and
- the Indigenous Centres nationally.