

Indigenous Student Success Program

2022 Performance Report

Organisation	University of Sydney		
Contact Person	Jane Stanley, Director, Gadigal Centre		
Phone	0425840739	e-mail	Jane.stanley@sydney.edu.au

1. Enrolments (Access)

The University's commitment to improving access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has produced another increase in student numbers this year. The Indigenous Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSL) for the University in 2022 was 335.07. This represents a 3.9% rise in the figure reported in 2021 (322.5).

The University identified three distinct, but related, focus areas to drive improvements in access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: outreach activities, specialist entry programs and scholarships. While the University draws on ISSP funding to support a suite of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outreach activities, these are enhanced by a number of specially designed entry programs and scholarships funded through a combination of University funding and gifts made through bequests and donor contributions.

1.1. Outreach Activities

ISSP funding is utilised alongside existing internal University resources to support a broad spectrum of outreach and engagement activities tailored to expand access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The primary pre-tertiary components of this are the *Gadalung* (Summer) and *Tahgara* (Winter) programs. A description of each of these is provided below. Both programs are routinely reviewed and refined with reference to student, community, high school and other feedback.

The *Tahgara* program was held from 11 – 15 July 2022 where the University hosted 49 Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants from 36 schools across NSW and QLD. The program was run as a week-long residential program with participants staying in Sydney and travelling to the University campus every day by private coach.

Each participant attended examination and other preparation workshops, enjoyed bespoke faculty experiences, engaged in cultural connection activities, learnt about the Gadigal Centre's support services and signed up for tutoring. Participants were also provided with structured guidance on applying for degrees, pathways for entry and information on the suite of residential and other scholarships at the University. Participant's were also able to connect with a community of University Student Ambassadors, Gadigal Centre staff and other staff from across the University. All participants had access to well-being support provided by our Indigenous Well-being team.

The *Gadalung* Program was held from 4 - 9 December 2022. The University hosted 122 Year 11 & 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and four chaperones from 50 schools across Australia. The program was run as a week-long residential program with participants living on

campus in one of the University's residential colleges for the week. The program was designed to share valuable insights about living and studying at University for participants through story sharing, cultural connection activities and performances, faculty experiences, admission pathway and presentations. Time was spent in the Gadigal Centre with community members and staff learning about support services, how to prepare financially for university and participated in a Q&A panel with alumni and current students. Throughout the week, all had opportunities to connect with student ambassadors, students and University staff to chat about their observations and have any questions answered. Like those attending the *Tahgara program*, they also learnt about how to access well-being and other supports provided by our Indigenous Well-being team.

Alongside these programs, the University's Indigenous Recruitment team works directly with school students, providing one-on-one consultations to support them with their applications to UAC. This is complemented by a series of structured school visits, webinars and online chat to aid each person's decision-making journey and increase access to support. The University also delivers a series of on-campus events with our recruitment partners and targeted schools to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These events, similar to the *Tahgara* and *Gadalung* programs cited above, are specifically designed to provide prospective students with:

- the opportunity to experience the University campus and life as a student;
- information regarding the financial costs associated with the University experience and develop an understanding of the financial supports available;
- the opportunity to ask current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students about their experiences at the University.

1.2. Specialist Entry Programs

A key element of the messaging at each of these outreach events and programs is to provide information on the range of bespoke entry pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into the University. The University funds two primary entry programs in this respect.

The *Gadigal Program* is an initiative which provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the opportunity to secure an early conditional offer to the University with modified ATAR requirements. The Gadigal Program also provides students with access to a range of academic skills courses prior to commencing University, ongoing academic and personal support throughout their degree, and up to \$5,000 to support mobility and exchange programs.

Launched in 2022, the University has supplemented this with the innovative *Extended Bachelor Program*. Specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who wish to pursue humanities, sciences or health degrees, this degree program includes an additional year of study which provides academic and cultural support to students as they transition to University study. Each successful applicant is also awarded a dedicated Extended Bachelor Program Scholarship, worth up to \$20,000 per year.

1.3. Scholarships

As is made clear above, scholarships are an important element of the University's specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student entry programs. The University also offers a broad range of bursaries and academic prizes to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' entry into higher education. This is in addition to the extensive range of generalist scholarships

available to all University students, awarded on a combination of academic merit and in recognition of financial hardship.

In 2022, the University awarded an estimated 272 scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for a combined value of \$1,589,649.56. These scholarships were funded through a combination of University resources and philanthropic contributions.

2. Progression (outcomes)

The success rate (units passed/units attempted) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the University in 2022 was 85.7%. This represents an increase on the corresponding rate reported in 2021 (82.54%) and is broadly consistent with the high standards reported in 2020 (84.96%). This level of success is a direct product of the focused support provided by academic and professional staff across the University.

The Gadigal Centre, opened in 2021, is the nexus for this support. It provides an extensive suite of academic and professional services and support, led and delivered by a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support team members. It is under the administration of this team that the majority of the ISSP funding is channelled in support of the University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Through the provision of academic, pastoral and cultural support services, the Gadigal Centre is the University's dedicated student centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It is designed to meet the needs of our students, integrate with the principles outlined in the University's Student Experience Strategy and is modelled on best practices in peer institutions.

Throughout 2022, the Gadigal Centre offered a scheduled program of activities to facilitate community building amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and a peer mentoring program to further reinforce networks across student cohorts. An innovative aspect of this model is the introduction of dedicated points of contact within the Gadigal Centre for each faculty and school.

The *Mentoring Our Brothers and Sisters* (MOBS) program, resourced jointly through a combination of ISSP and University funds, is a structured, volunteer peer mentoring initiative in which continuing senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students mentor first-year students. The primary aims of this program are:

- to facilitate a smooth transition to University and increase retention rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their first year of university study; and,
- to build the professional, leadership and personal development capacity of continuing students.

MOBS's planned schedule of events were significantly impacted by the pandemic. Despite these trying circumstances, 22 mentors and 32 mentees remained engaged in the program during 2022.

"MOBS had an enormous impact on my first year of university. Moving to Sydney and leaving behind friends and family out West was tough, but the support network I was a part of as a MOBS mentee helped me get through it and excel in class. Besides easing the transition from high school to university — and leaving me with plenty of study skills and tips for navigating university life — MOBS helped me build a community and find a sense of belonging at USyd."

Ethan — MOBS Mentee, Arts

“Being both a mentor and mentee in MOBS has enabled me to build meaningful friendships and a strong sense of community among Indigenous students at the University of Sydney. As a former mentee, I’m honoured to give back to the community as a mentor and contribute to the support networks for incoming students. The full-circle moment of providing guidance and support has been truly fulfilling, and I’m grateful to continue being part of the MOBS community.”

Mia — MOBS Mentor, Law

The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) is a crucial academic support mechanism available for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at the University. This program is overseen by the Learning Officer at the Gadigal team and is supported by a combination of University and ISSP funding streams. ITAS facilitates access to supplementary tutoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, delivered in one-to-one or small group sessions. The figures for this assistance in 2022 are reproduced below in Table 2.

Table Tutorial assistance provided in 2022

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted ¹	Total number of tutorial sessions attended ²	Total hours of assistance ³	Expenditure ⁴ (\$)
Enabling	6	17	22	\$1936.96
Undergraduate	83	891	1393.02	\$122,646.37
Post-graduate	32	438	886	\$78,006.55
Other	53	276	535	\$47,103.28
Total	174	1622	2836.02	\$249,693.15

3. Completions (outcomes)

The completion rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2022 was 148. This represents an increase of 32% from the previous year (the figure reported in 2021 was 112). The majority of these completions were in the Faculty of Medicine and Health by way of postgraduate coursework degrees.

4. Regional and remote students

The Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSL) for regional and remote-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2022 was 81.21. This represents a slight decrease from the previous year (figure reported in 2021 89.6).

The University delivers several courses specifically for regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This includes the Masters in Indigenous Language Education (MILE) and the Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion (GDIHP). These initiatives are funded by the University with support from the Commonwealth Government’s Away From Base (AFB) funding scheme. The strategies and initiatives outlined in Section 1 of this report apply equally here, with respect to regional and remote students. The Indigenous student recruitment unit works to engage with potential students in regional and remote areas, while on campus events provide the opportunity for an immersive introductory experience at the University, particularly for individuals who live far from the main campus. In addition, the Gadigal Program assists Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander students apply for undergraduate degrees by providing modified entry pathways for applicants from regional and remote areas.

Once enrolled, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional and remote areas also have access to all the services outlined in Section 2 of this report. In particular, they can draw on the University's extensive scholarship offerings to assist with relocation and receive support from the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support services teams. Specifically, in this context, the Gadigal Centre provides regional and remote Indigenous students with a culturally safe, welcoming environment that promotes a sense of belonging.

See Appendix 1 for AFB (Away from Base) success stories.

5. Eligibility criteria

5.1. Indigenous Education Strategy

The [*One Sydney, Many People Strategy 2021-2024*](#) is a whole-of-University commitment to a uniquely Australian educational experience. *One Sydney, Many People* strives to harness and embed more than 60,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning approaches, culture, and knowledge into every part of the University.

Shaped with reference to four strategic focus areas (*Nguragaingun*: Culture and Community; *Eora*: People (students and staff); *Ngara*: Education and Research; and *Pemulian*: Environment (a sense of Place)), work to realise the commitments in *One Sydney, Many People* is proceeding in phases across two mutually reinforcing elements which set a tangible and actionable path forward:

1. **Strategic initiatives:** A set of 35 initiatives designed to meet the core commitments within *One Sydney, Many People*.
2. **Local Implementation Plans:** A series of collaborative approaches to strengthen the impact of the strategy. Authored at the local level, across the University's faculties, schools, and PSUs, the Local Implementation Plans demonstrate a university-wide commitment to the strategy.

These two elements are overseen by a tiered governance structure where strategic oversight is retained by the University Executive and operational decisions are made by a Project Control Board and a series of tightly focused steering committees.

5.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

In 2022, the University satisfied its requirements under Section 12 of the ISSP guidelines through the launch of the new *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan 2022 – 2024* (the Employment Plan) and the *One Sydney, Many People Strategy 2021 – 2024* (the OSMP Strategy). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan 2022-2024 complements the work of the *One Sydney, Many People Strategy 2021-2024*, including achieving population parity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff by 2030. The Employment Plan and the OSMP Strategy can be found online at <https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/careers-at-sydney/indigenous-careers.html> and <https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/our-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-community.html>

The Employment Plan focuses on four key objectives:

1. Community engagement – the University of Sydney is recognised as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
2. Career attraction, development, and progression – creating career pathways from entry-level to senior level in both professional and academic areas, with visible opportunities for career attraction, development, and progression
3. Workplace culture and experience – a university culture that is inclusive and culturally safe.
4. Accountability and best practice – leadership that embeds cultural capabilities and respect in policies and practices within their work areas

As of 31 December 2022, the University recorded that 1.15% of its workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This was a small improvement from 1.12% in 2021 and 1.01% in 2020.

Table Indigenous workforce data (2022 breakdown) ^[1]

Consistent with previous data submissions, this data includes all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members who was active at any point in time in 2022.

Level/Position	Casual and Contractor (Affiliate)		Permanent		Grand Total
	Academic	Non-Academic	Academic	Non-Academic	
Agreed Rate		2			2
ALL (Casual Academic)	66				66
Executive (Exempt)			2		2
LV01		17			17
LV02		23		2	25
LV03		5		1	6
LV04		7		13	20
LV05		11		14	25
LV06		3		14	17
LV07		3		13	16
LV08				9	9
LV09				5	5
LV10				1	1
LVA			8		8
LVB			19		19
LVC			4		4
LVD			11		11
LVE			3		3
NPY (Affiliate)	8				8
SPSA				4	4
SPSB				1	1
Grand Total	74	71	47	77	269

Note: Data captures Indigenous staff active at any point during 2022, with the table representing unique individual's rather than roles. Some staff held more than one role, for them, only one role is selected.

5.3. Indigenous Governance Mechanism

The University fulfils its obligations to have an Indigenous Governance Mechanism, under section 11 of the ISSP Guidelines, by having four Aboriginal persons (two appropriately qualified senior academic employees and two senior executive employees) who have responsibility for advising on, reviewing, making recommendations about, and monitoring the use of ISSP grants. These individuals are:

- Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver AM FRSN, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Services (since October 2018)
- Professor Jennifer Barrett, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous (Academic) (since August 2021)
- Jane Stanley, Director Gadigal Centre, Indigenous Strategy and Services (since July 2021)
- Karl Hoffmann, Senior Manager, Strategy, Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Services (since March 2020)

Under the University of Sydney (Delegation of Authority) Rule 2020, 6.19.15, The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Services is granted authority to oversee the administration of all ISSP funding. Within this context, the senior leadership team cited above meets regularly with other university stakeholders to monitor and review the progress of activities funded by ISSP.

Appendix 1- Away from Base success stories

The University of Sydney offers two programs accredited with Away from Base funding, one of which is the Master in Indigenous Languages Education (MILE). This program is attended by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander teachers seeking additional training to teach an Aboriginal language.

MILE – Master in Indigenous Languages Education

"I enrolled in MILE without any firm understanding of what the degree involved, I simply wanted to further my knowledge and comprehension of my indigenous language. MILE certainly provided that opportunity, as well as so much more. Completing the Masters of Indigenous Language in Education (MILE) has been one of the most rewarding, inspiring and memorable educational experiences in which I have been fortunate to take part.

Initially, I found being thrust into the world of grammar, tenses and the phonetic alphabet quite daunting, however, very quickly I soon understood the relevance of this knowledge in terms of both my own language comprehension and how it would assist my pedagogy.

One of the most motivating aspects of this course is that the MILE cohort are entirely focused on assimilating and comprehending the material delivered in each of the units of study. I have never experienced such a supportive and enthusiastic cohort. MILE-ers both past and present, support each other, driven by their passion to expand their language comprehension and necessary skills to impart this knowledge effectively to their students and wider community.

Distinct from other university courses, the lecturers who deliver the MILE program are invested in empowering their students with the skills and strategies to successfully teach their language to others. Their enthusiasm, encouragement and commitment to nurture and support the revival of Australian Indigenous languages is both inspirational and infectious.

Most importantly, the MILE program equips Aboriginal teachers with the necessary skills to implement and teach language programs which is vital for our families communities and future generations. To learn, speak and share the language of Country has been a long time in the making and MILE provides a remarkable opportunity to be at the forefront of fostering language revitalisation."



Debbie Smith
Dharug Language and Music Teacher
Blue Mountains Grammar School

MILE – Master in Indigenous Languages Education

“Having completed MILE in 2022, as I am about to graduate in May 2023, I look back and am overcome with a feeling of accomplishment and pride. At the age of 62 I had a yearning to learn my own language. I have travelled much of Australia and volunteered in the desert, and I realised I had learnt a lot about other Mobs’ language and yet knew very little of my own. I enrolled in MILE as a personal goal and was thinking it may have taken some time to complete. But I completed it in the allowed time of one year.

Throughout the year I made friends and great study partners. My fellow MILE-ers will always hold a special place within me. The mutual support we had as a cohort was invaluable. The opportunity to connect with other Aboriginal language learners was exciting and it was also moving to learn about different mobs and their communities’ language journeys from QLD, SA and NSW

The support, teaching and learning gained from the lecturers was exceptional. Knowing they were always at the end of a phone or email was very reassuring. Their dedication to the students is commendable. The subjects were very unfamiliar to me but the lecturers teaching style and professionalism assisted in breaking down this new knowledge so as to understand it. The scaffolding made the learning achievable.

Being able to complete this degree via Away-From-Base was the only way I could have achieved it, as I am single, mature age and need to work. The AFB model allows students to achieve educationally, whilst still managing personal, work and home life.

MILE has given me a platform to teach, speak and grow people up within the language space. Connecting with community to instil pride and connection through language. Through language our identity grows strong and empowers us and our children. “



Leanne King

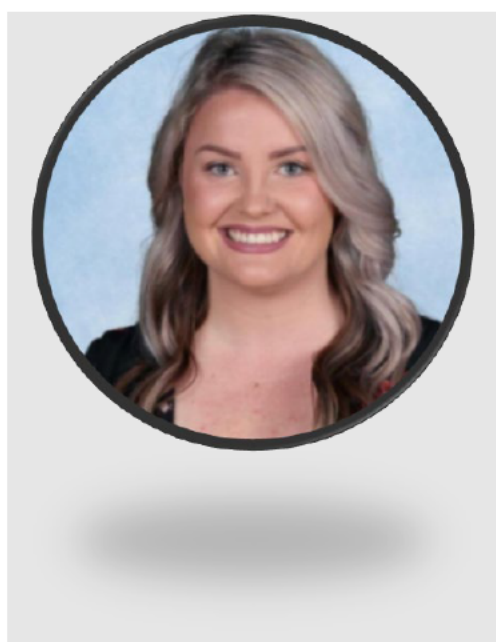
MILE – Master in Indigenous Languages Education

"I undertook MILE as a part of my journey in learning Wiradjuri, my Mother Tongue. I had previously completed a few other courses to learn Wiradjuri and signed up to MILE feeling that it was an obvious and sensible next step in solidifying my language knowledge and skills.

I was unsure what to expect at first, as I was aware the lecturers were not First Nations Peoples, but they immediately provided a culturally safe environment for us to learn in, and their deep respect, empathy and allyship was imbedded in every lesson they shared.

I found the MILE course to be incredibly in-depth and relevant without being too overwhelming, and I learnt so much more than I anticipated. Each module was carefully designed to provide the tools to improve our own individual languages and understand how to design programs to effectively teach them to others. The research component allowed me to put that learning into practice and helped me develop confidence in programming and teaching Wiradjuri language lessons. With the expertise gained during MILE, I designed and delivered Wiradjuri language lessons to over 700 students throughout 2022 and contributed to the end goal: reviving and continuing our sacred first languages.

Although it was at times difficult to work full-time and study-full time, I was supported wholeheartedly throughout my MILE journey by my fellow classmates and the outstanding lecturers. I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to complete this course and I am incredibly proud to be a MILE graduate!"



Renee Woodward (nee Clay), 5W Classroom Teacher, Glendore Public School

Graduate Diploma, Indigenous Health Promotion (GDIHP)

In this reporting period, we saw the largest cohort of students graduate in the GDIHP's 25-year history, with 30 students in one ceremony. It was also suggested that the graduation ceremony held on 8th December 2022 saw the most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students graduate in one ceremony in Sydney University's history. The ceremony was a tremendous occasion, and when Professor Joel Negin announced '*for the degree of Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion*' and began to call out the names of the graduands, the room erupted in cheers. Our students were the stars of the show.

The impact this has upon the workplaces, families, and communities connected to those students is vast. Two students accepted casual academic roles as ITAS tutors, and one alumnus was employed on a full-time five-year contract as the program's Indigenous & Education support officer. This strengthens the ongoing success of our students and inspires others to engage in the GDIHP degree. Additionally, one alumnus was employed in the team as a part-time research assistant, and one alumnus completed their Master of Philosophy (Medicine) degree while another commenced their Master of Philosophy (Medicine and Health) candidature, showing a pipeline of academic success that stems from the GDIHP degree.

Individuals who graduate from the GDIHP program receive advanced knowledge and skills in health promotion and public health, which can lead to future professional development opportunities. However, the impact of their education goes beyond their personal growth. These graduates use their expertise to contribute to the health and well-being of their communities and workplaces across Australia. This can be achieved through the development of innovative digital health solutions, implementation of best practices, and sharing their knowledge with others. Ultimately, this creates a ripple effect of positive change, benefiting society as a whole. Therefore, the impact of GDIHP graduates is not limited to their own personal development, but it extends to the wider community, making their graduation even more significant.







Graduates from the GDIHP cohort attending their graduation ceremony on 8th December 2022 with family and friends

All photos used with permission.

Additional information for completing the template

- ¹ This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2021. The figures for students should include the actual number (head count, not the EFTSL). Scholarship figures (head count and costs) should include the university award scholarships from the flexible finding pool as well as any preserved scholarships. Only payments made during 2021 should be included in this table. For multi-year scholarship agreements, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded in the performance reporting for the relevant future grant year.
- ² This figures provide for the total number of students receiving scholarships and expenditure for those scholarships. For the student count, in cases where a student receives more than one scholarship, the student would only be counted once in the total (consequently the total figure may not be the sum of the preceding columns). For the expenditure, the total should be the total of the preceding expenditure columns.
- ³ Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.
- ⁴ Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.
- ⁵ Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.
- ⁶ Total number of unique students supported by tutorial assistance (if students have attended multiple tutorial sessions, still count them as 1 student).
- ⁷ Record total number of tutorial sessions attended by students (each class a student attends counts as 1, the same student may attend multiple tutorial sessions throughout the year).
- ⁸ Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).
- ⁹ Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.
- ¹⁰ Only record amounts which required payment during the 2021 calendar year. For multi-year scholarship offers, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded against the reporting for the relevant future grant year. Note the data in this table is a subset of the scholarship data provided in Table 1.
- ¹¹ Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2021 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2021 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2021 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships and preserved scholarships).
- ¹² This data confirms the university's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.
- ¹³ Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff (Fixed Term and Continuing) as at 31 December 2021
- ¹⁴ While universities report on the number of Indigenous staff through mainstream reporting requirements, the additional information provided in this section provides enhanced monitoring of the university's efforts in building its Indigenous workforce. Record all Indigenous staff employed by the university, including those not working on ISSP-related activities. The numbers recorded here should be a headcount of staff and not the full-time equivalent.

¹Total number of unique students supported by tutorial assistance (if students have attended multiple tutorial sessions, still count them as 1 student).

² Record total number of tutorial sessions attended by students (each class a student attends counts as 1, the same student may attend multiple tutorial sessions throughout the year).

³ Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).

⁴ Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.