



UNSW Indigenous Research Plan

2026-2029



Acknowledgement of Country

NSW respectfully acknowledges the Bidjigal, Biripai, Dharug, Gadigal, Gumbaynggirr, Ngunnawal, Ngambri, and Wiradjuri peoples, on whose unceded lands we are privileged to learn, teach, and work. We honour the Elders of these Nations, past and present, and recognise the broader Nations with whom we walk together. UNSW acknowledges the enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Culture, Community, and Country.

Terminology: “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples” is the preferred, community-determined term to describe collectively the distinct cultural groups across Australia. In NSW the term “Aboriginal” is often used to acknowledge that this state is on Aboriginal lands, e.g., Aboriginal Affairs, Aboriginal Education. “Indigenous” is an internationally recognised collective term to describe First Peoples from across the world. As a result, it has become an alternate term in Australia, often used to reflect governmental programs and funding, and to recognise international Indigenous conventions and scholarship (e.g., UNDRIP, Indigenous research methodologies).

Front cover; featured left: Dennis Golding - Between the land and water, 2024
“The land in which UNSW (main campus) is based on holds great significance to the local Aboriginal people as it is saltwater Country that provides life sustainability, knowledge systems and space for cultural gatherings. Artist Dennis Golding takes inspiration of how the clans have used natural materials such as rock, plants, and shells to create cultural tools including flints, hooks, and nawis. These motifs are woven through a topographical patterning of the local coastline that frames the landscape and flows into the river systems (referencing all UNSW campuses). The artwork also shares how seaweed washes up to the local shores including Coogee, which in the local language refers to the ‘drying or smelling seaweeds’. The lined patterns of land and water meet the seaweeds and bold lined pathways are woven in to acknowledge the many nations who live, work and travel across this region. Between the traditional practices, and the contemporary experiences of life on this Country, the artwork recognises how this country has been cared for, and how culture continues through deep listening, sharing stories and exchanging knowledge.”

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Foreword

UNSW Sydney, Kensington is built on Bidjigal lands, sustained for tens of thousands of years by knowledge systems, cultural practices, scientific innovation, and custodial responsibilities. We recognise that each of our campuses are on unceded Aboriginal lands. It is with deep respect for this enduring custodianship, and in recognition of the sovereign rights of Indigenous peoples to determine their own research futures, that we present the UNSW Indigenous Research Plan 2026–2029.

The Indigenous Research Plan affirms that research involving Indigenous Peoples is not simply a technical or academic endeavour, it is a cultural, ethical and relational responsibility. Indigenous Knowledges are not resources to be extracted, but gifts that carry obligations of care, reciprocity, respect and continuity. UNSW commits to being guided by Indigenous authority, community priorities and Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being. This means centring Indigenous governance, honouring cultural protocols, protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, and ensuring research strengthens Country, communities and future generations.

The Indigenous Research Plan is a living commitment. It will evolve through Indigenous leadership, community guidance and ongoing reflection, recognising that Indigenous Knowledges are dynamic and that our responsibilities to Country and people do not end with project timelines or institutional reporting cycles. The Indigenous Research Plan advances UNSW’s strategic ambition articulated through the UNSW Research Plan and UNSW’s Progress for All strategy, which position Indigenous Knowledges as a cross-cutting principle essential to research integrity, inclusion, and social justice. By embedding Indigenous governance, strengthening capability, and honouring Country-based protocols, UNSW affirms that Indigenous-led and Indigenous-engaged research enriches our academic excellence and strengthens our societal impact. The Indigenous Research Plan is grounded in the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, which affirms that all research affecting or involving Indigenous peoples—whether or not it includes direct participation—carries responsibilities of cultural integrity, accountability, transparency, and reciprocity. These principles guide

our collective commitment to ensuring that Indigenous research at UNSW is undertaken ethically, respectfully, and in genuine partnership with communities, Elders, and knowledge holders. Indigenous research at UNSW is not a standalone endeavour, it is a whole-of-institution responsibility. It is fundamental to our identity, and we are committed to equity and to the translation of knowledge for public good.

This Plan outlines the structures, relationships, and investment required to uphold this responsibility across all disciplines, Faculties, and Institutes. Over the next four years, UNSW will:

- **Embed Indigenous research governance** as a foundational principle, ensuring meaningful Indigenous leadership and decision-making across our research ecosystem.
- **Deepen research guided by Indigenous communities**, honouring diverse priorities and strengthening reciprocal partnerships grounded in trust, respect, and shared benefit.
- **Nurture the success and visibility of Indigenous researchers and Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates**, building pathways of opportunity and cultivating culturally safe, empowering research environments.
- **Lead globally in Indigenous reciprocal knowledges exchange**, elevating Indigenous voices and amplifying their impact across local, national, and international contexts.

These initiatives reflect our shared responsibility to contribute to the flourishing of Indigenous peoples and knowledges, ensuring that UNSW research generates outcomes that are ethical, equitable, and transformative. As Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Engagement & Research, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global, we affirm our joint commitment to guiding the implementation of this Plan.

We acknowledge the leadership of Indigenous Elders, communities, scholars, and partners whose insights and generosity continue to shape UNSW's research future. We call upon all researchers, supervisors, HDR candidates, and professional staff to uphold the highest standards of Indigenous research practice and actively contribute to this shared vision. We offer this Plan as

a living framework—one that will grow through ongoing dialogue, community guidance, and reflective practice. It is an invitation to deepen our collective responsibility to Indigenous peoples and knowledges, ensuring that UNSW's research contributes meaningfully to a more just and inclusive Australia and world.



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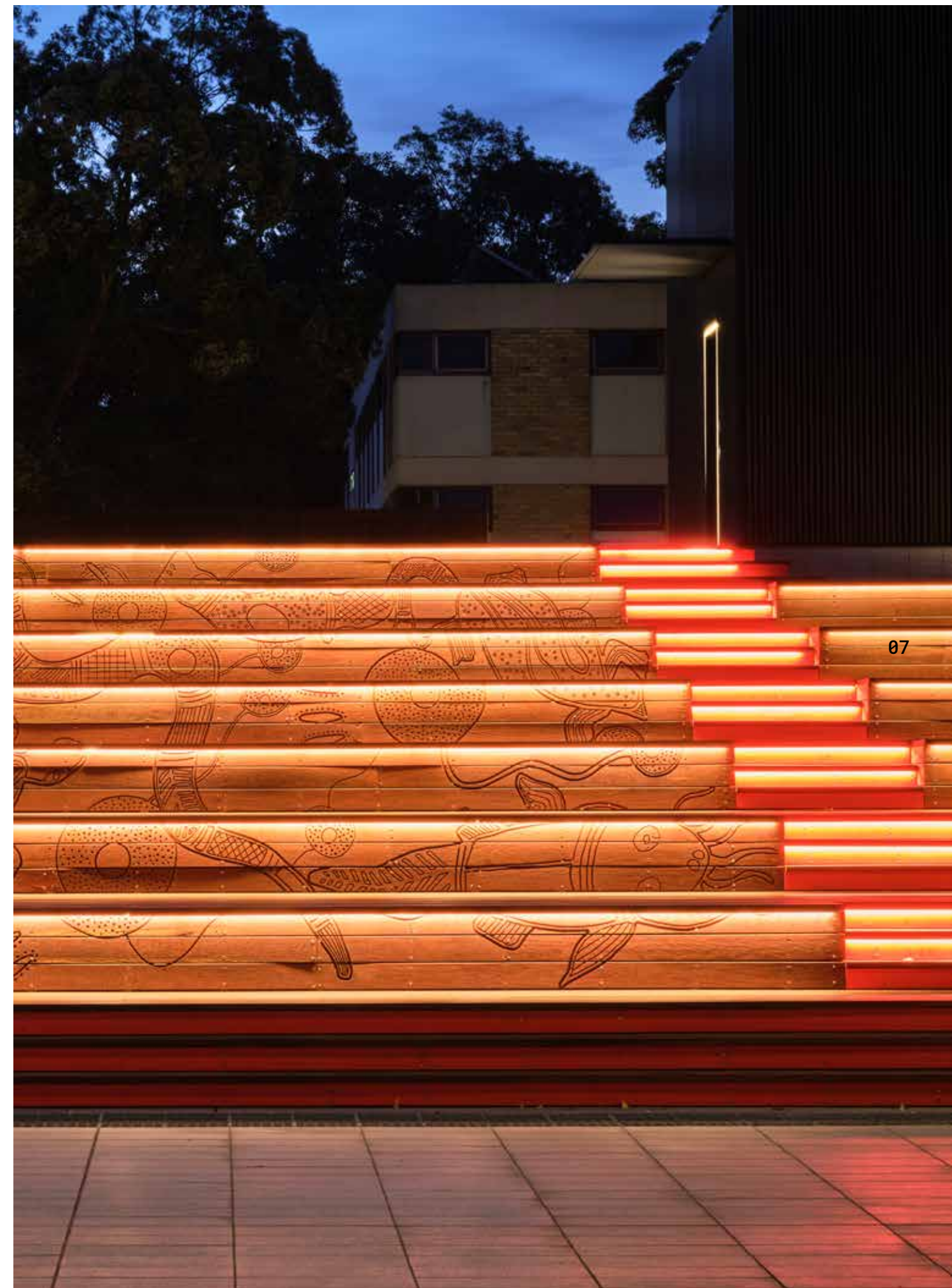
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Indigenous research

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics states:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research includes all research that impacts or is of particular significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including the planning, collection, analysis and dissemination of information or knowledge, in any format or medium, which is about or may affect Indigenous peoples, either collectively or individually (Walter, Lovett, Bodkin Andrews and Lee, 2018).
- The AIATSIS Code applies to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, regardless of whether the research intends to directly involve human participants and specifically extends to the use of collections such as archives, datasets, collections of information or biospecimens that may not otherwise be categorised as human research.

Alignment: 'UNSW Progress for All – UNSW Research Plan'

The UNSW Indigenous Research Plan is deeply aligned with the University's overarching strategy, Progress for All, and the UNSW Research Plan. Interconnected and mutually reinforcing, these frameworks share a commitment to positive societal impact and position Indigenous Knowledges as a cross-cutting principle essential to research integrity, inclusion, and social justice.

Together, they create an integrated relational ecosystem where Indigenous-led and Indigenous-engaged research is not a standalone endeavour but embedded across disciplines, governance structures, and partnerships. This alignment ensures that Indigenous research strengthens UNSW's academic excellence and amplifies societal impact, advancing our shared vision for a just, inclusive, and globally connected future.

'Our commitment to incorporating Indigenous Knowledges is one of the central cross-cutting themes of the Societal Impact Framework. Indigenous Knowledges have been fundamental to life in Australia for countless generations. This commitment to incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into our work demonstrates our aspiration to achieve greater impact informed by knowledge and history.'

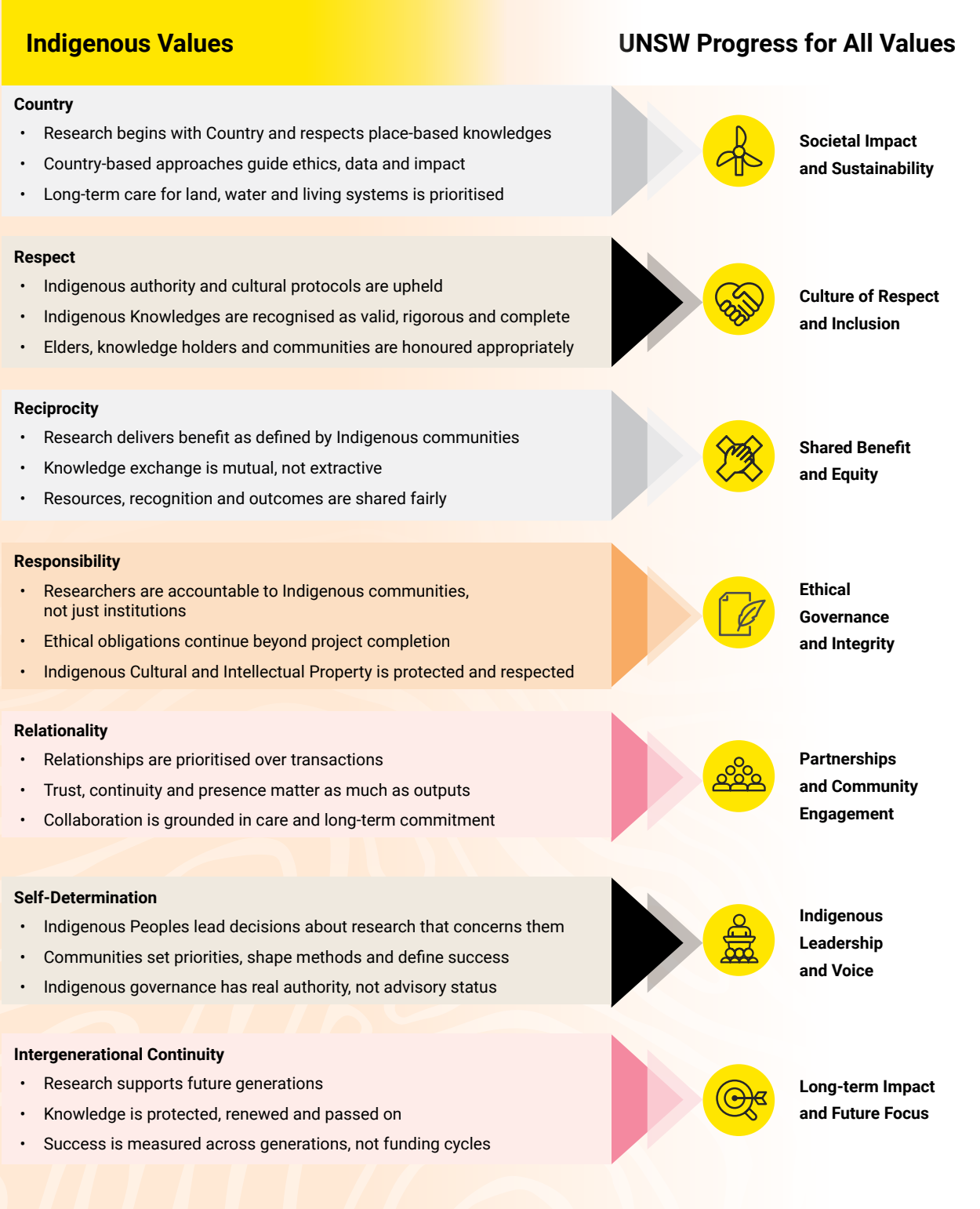
UNSW Strategy: Progress for All also commits to positioning Indigenous perspectives, values and methodologies as foundational elements in our vision, decision-making and strategic direction. Indigenous Knowledges is not an add-on or isolated initiative, but rather a central component, reflecting a commitment to mutual respect, knowledge exchange and sustainability. We will look to ways of learning from Indigenous ways of knowing to drive environmental, social and economic solutions.

UNSW Strategy: Progress for All
'By embedding cross-cutting principles such as Indigenous Knowledges, UNSW ensures that research integrity, inclusion, and social justice are realised through the lived application of Progress for All, placing positive societal impact at the heart of everything we do. Our focus on fostering an inclusive research culture will create an ecosystem where all can thrive.'



Indigenous values alignment map

Indigenous Values + UNSW Progress for All values



Relational domain action plan





Relational domain one:

Indigenous Authority and Responsibility in Research

Indigenous research at UNSW is guided by Indigenous authority and cultural responsibility. Governance is not merely structural oversight but an expression of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and accountability to Country and community. Ethical research practice flows from Indigenous law, cultural protocols and relationships, not solely from institutional processes. This domain ensures Indigenous Peoples exercise leadership and decision-making authority over research that concerns them, that Indigenous ethical frameworks (NHMRC, 2018; AIATSIS,2020) are upheld in practice, and that responsibility extends beyond compliance to enduring cultural accountability.

Objectives:

- 1. Embed Indigenous Research Governance at all levels of UNSW's research governance structures.
- 2. Uphold and rigorously apply the Ethical Guidelines for Research with Indigenous Peoples.

Key initiatives:

- Establish an Indigenous Research Governance Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Indigenous Engagement and Research, reporting to the DVC Indigenous and the DVC Research and Enterprise, ensuring Indigenous representation in all major research decision-making bodies.
- Develop a UNSW Indigenous Research Protocols and Ethics Toolkit, aligned with AIATSIS and NHMRC guidelines.
- Provide professional development for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff (including HDR supervisors) and community members, Human Research Ethics Committee members, and Human Research Advisory members on Indigenous ethical and good practice and Indigenous research capability.
- Implementing robust monitoring and transparent reporting to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.
- Integrate Indigenous impact indicators (community empowerment, cultural continuity, policy influence, local benefit) into the Societal Impact Framework (SIF).
- Provide secure, culturally governed digital repositories to safeguard historical, current and future Indigenous collections, oral histories, and community research outputs.
- Ensure Indigenous Research Data custodianship meets community, institutional and national expectations, aligned with the UNSW Data Strategy (CDO) and the Research Data Experience (RDE) program, and grounded in Indigenous data sovereignty principles.

Measurable Outcomes:

- Establish and operationalise an Indigenous Research Governance Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Engagement and Research, that formally reports to the DVC Indigenous and the DVC Research and Enterprise, with Indigenous representation embedded across 100% of major university research decision-making bodies and annual reporting on participation and influence in research governance by the end of 2026.
- All research projects involving Indigenous data or participants demonstrate responsibility with ethical protocols.
- Annual reporting of Indigenous research activity, responsibility, and outcomes published transparently.
 - Reporting will include evidence of Indigenous decision-making authority in research processes, adherence to ICIP and data governance standards, reciprocal benefit outcomes, and mechanisms supporting long-term knowledge protection and intergenerational continuity.



Relational Domain two:

Research in relationship with Indigenous communities

Objectives:

- 1. Promote and honour the diversity of Indigenous communities served by UNSW, ensuring their research priorities are identified, respected, and effectively addressed.
- 2. Strengthen and expand enduring research partnerships with Indigenous communities, organisations, and businesses, fostering genuine collaboration and reciprocity.
- 3. Equip UNSW researchers to uphold ethical practice by providing clear guidance and support in negotiating Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights and protocol agreements with Indigenous communities.

Key initiatives:

- Develop a UNSW Indigenous Research Partnership Framework, co-designed with communities, outlining engagement, benefit-sharing, and reciprocity standards.
- Incorporate formal relationships with Indigenous communities as aligned with the Societal Impact Framework and Micro-Treaty through the newly established Indigenous Societal Impact Academy.
- Establish an Indigenous Research Collaboration Fund to support co-designed, community-led projects.
- Introduce a Community Partner-in-Residence Program to embed Indigenous community leaders within research teams.
- Implement ICIP training and agreements across all Faculties and Institutes align with UNSW Policy Governance.

Measurable outcomes: How are relationships strengthened?

- 50% increase in co-designed research projects with Indigenous partners by 2028.
- At least one partnership agreement established with an Indigenous organisation in each Faculty by 2027.
- Annual review of ICIP responsibility and outcomes across UNSW research.

Relational Domain three:

Building on and growing the capacity and success of Indigenous researchers and HDR candidates at UNSW

The strength of Indigenous research lies in Indigenous people. This domain focuses on nurturing the next generations of Indigenous researchers, HDR candidates and knowledge leaders through culturally empowering pathways, collective empowerment and Indigenous-led mentoring. UNSW recognises that Indigenous research excellence includes diverse pathways, responsibilities to community and Country, and forms of leadership that may not align with Western academic norms (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, R. & Kelly, 2012; Anderson, Blue, Pham & Saward, 2022). Indigenous researchers are empowered to succeed on their own terms, while contributing to collective knowledge and impact. By investing in professional development, inclusive supervision, and equitable access, UNSW is building a thriving community of Indigenous scholars who lead with impact.

Objectives:

- 1. Foster the growth and opportunities for Indigenous researchers at UNSW, providing targeted support for their professional development and research success.
- 2. Increase enrolments of Indigenous HDR candidates while enhancing their progression, retention, and completion outcomes.
- 3. Strengthen non-traditional pathways for Indigenous candidates to access postgraduate research opportunities, ensuring equitable and inclusive access at UNSW.

Key initiatives:

- Create a UNSW Indigenous Researcher Development and pipeline Program from early career to mid-career and professorship, offering mentoring, fellowships, and grant-writing support.
- Launch an Indigenous HDR Pathways Program that provides bridging, scholarships, and culturally tailored supervision.
- Establish an Indigenous HDR Supervisors Network to share best practice in culturally responsive supervision.
- Provide targeted funding for Indigenous-led research groups and early-career researcher grants.
- Position Indigenous-led research as an exemplar of impactful, socially grounded research.
- Ensure that UNSW's flagship Missions respect Indigenous Knowledges protocols and Country-based approaches.

Measurable Outcomes:

- 30% increase in Indigenous HDR enrolments and completions by 2029.
- At least two Indigenous Research Fellows appointed annually.
- All HDR supervisors of Indigenous candidates to complete cultural responsiveness training by 2027.

Indigenous research is built through relationship. This domain centres Indigenous communities as knowledge holders, decision-makers and co-authors of research agendas, outcomes and narratives. Research priorities emerge from community aspirations and are shaped through trust, reciprocity and respect. UNSW commits to walking alongside Indigenous communities in ways that strengthen local capability, protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) (Janke, 2021; Janke, 2017), and ensure research delivers meaningful benefit as defined by communities themselves.



Relational Domain four:

Positioning UNSW as a Global Leader in Indigenous Reciprocal Knowledges Exchange and Societal Impact

Indigenous Knowledges have always been global, relational and interconnected. This domain positions UNSW as a respectful participant in reciprocal Indigenous Knowledges exchange across Nations, Countries and cultures, grounded in shared responsibility rather than competition or extraction. Through global relationships, this domain envisions a vibrant network of collaboration, where research transcends borders to create lasting social, environmental, and cultural impact. Indigenous voices will be amplified through global relationships partnerships and shared learning.

Objectives:

1. Strengthen research and knowledge exchange across global Indigenous communities, aligned with UNSW's broader initiatives, as outlined in Progress for All.
2. Translate research into lasting social, environmental, and cultural impacts for Indigenous communities worldwide.
3. Establish a global Indigenous Knowledges exchange network and community of practice that connects universities and organisations committed to Indigenous inclusion.

Key Initiatives:

- Build on the Global Indigenous Research Network (GIRN) hosted by UNSW to facilitate collaboration across universities and Indigenous organisations worldwide.
- Host an Annual Indigenous Knowledges Exchange Forum showcasing Indigenous-led research and partnerships.
- Include Indigenous impact stories in UNSW's annual research reporting, ARC Engagement & Impact submissions, and global ranking narratives.
- Promote UNSW research that demonstrates Indigenous-led global impact through publications and international forums.
- Through the newly established Indigenous Societal Impact Academy, map how Indigenous research informs or leads in each of UNSW's flagship Missions (for example: Indigenous science and sustainability; Indigenous data sovereignty and AI ethics; Indigenous health and wellbeing frameworks).

Measurable Outcomes:

- Global Indigenous Research Network established by 2027 with at least 10 partner institutions.
- Bi-annual international knowledge exchange forum hosted from 2026.
- Increase in joint Indigenous-authored research outputs by 40% by 2029.



Monitoring and evaluation

Implementation will be led jointly by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global, with annual progress reporting to the University Leadership Team. A five-year impact review (2030) will assess performance against key indicators in governance, engagement, researcher development and global impact.

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