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To cite this article: Annette Gainsford & Katherine Attree (21 Jul 2025): A university-wide approach to embedding an Indigenous graduate attribute, Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, DOI: [10.1080/1360080X.2025.2536052](https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2025.2536052)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2025.2536052>



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Published online: 21 Jul 2025.



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A university-wide approach to embedding an Indigenous graduate attribute

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ABSTRACT

Sectorial and scholarly calls to universities for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in curricula are underpinned by international social justice priorities and the need to produce graduates capable of advancing these goals. Institutional challenges to the successful achievement of this agenda include a shortage of Indigenous staff, insufficient resourcing and resources, varying levels of leadership commitment and insufficient training for non-Indigenous staff. Using a case example from an Australian university, we illustrate how a comprehensive institution-wide strategy to implement an Indigenous graduate attribute underpinned by policy, process, governance and leadership commitment has achieved significant success in the face of the above challenges. We propose our model as an adaptable framework – to achieve similar outcomes.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 March 2025
Accepted 15 July 2025

KEYWORDS

Curriculum; Indigenous; graduate attributes; higher education policy; First Nations

Introduction

In the contemporary academic landscape, Australian universities are pursuing strategies to integrate Indigenous perspectives into their academic programs. This progressive initiative is guided by recommendations from several educational reviews and peak body strategic documents, including the Review of Higher Education (Bradley et al., 2008), the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency (Universities Australia, 2011b), the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (Behrendt et al., 2012), the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy (2017 and 2022–2025), and most recently the Australian Universities Accord Final Report (O’Kane et al., 2024). A significant aspect of this initiative is the incorporation of an Indigenous graduate attribute, which is positioned as a pathway for all students to develop the requisite knowledge and skills for effective professional engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities’ post-graduation. Using a case example from an Australian university, we illustrate a comprehensive institution-wide strategy for the incorporation of an Indigenous graduate attribute. This strategy unifies leadership, policy and governance with a curriculum structure, a phased process, a dedicated support team and professional development for academics.

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Despite the specificity of the case, we are of the opinion that this holistic institutional approach could serve as a model to progress the embedding of Indigenous perspectives both within Australia and in other colonised nations. This article proceeds as follows: first we explain the background to the calls for inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in curricula, next we synthesise the literature outlining the various ways universities have approached this work. Following this we put forward our case example and lastly, we conclude with a call to university leaders for commitment and resourcing to progress this important work.

Literature review

Our literature review addresses both drivers and challenges to Indigenising curriculum and discusses the varied approaches undertaken.

Drivers

Drivers supporting the inclusion of Indigenous content in the curriculum include national and international policy agendas that require universities to graduate students capable of acting interculturally in an increasingly globalised world (Acton et al., 2017). Further, both Indigenous scholars and peak sectoral higher education bodies argue that embedding knowledge of Indigenous perspectives into curricula is a responsibility that universities bear to promote a broader social justice, equity and human rights agenda (Acton et al., 2017; Goerke & Kickett, 2013; Universities Australia, 2011a). These viewpoints are underpinned by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which argues that Indigenous cultures should be appropriately reflected in education as a way to combat prejudice and discrimination (Burns, 2013). From an equity perspective, scholars also suggest that if institutions are to increase Indigenous participation and success in higher education, the curricula need to recognise and respect Indigenous ways of knowing being and doing as well as provide an accurate history of the nation (Anderson et al., 2023; Behrendt et al., 2012). Additionally, from an employability perspective, the capability for **all** graduates to work effectively for and with Indigenous people is increasingly an expectation of many industry bodies or professional standards agencies. For example, Australian teacher education programs require graduate teachers to evidence their capability to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to promote reconciliation in the classroom (Burgess et al., 2022). In the Australian health professions, the 2014 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum framework aims to improve the cultural safety of Indigenous Australians in health care settings (Coombe et al., 2017; Delbridge et al., 2022). In the legal profession, the report from the 1987–1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody demanded that ‘persons working in the court service and in the probation and parole services whose duties bring them into contact with Aboriginal people be encouraged to participate in an appropriate training and development program’ (Johnstone, 1991, p. 7). Lastly, more than 2,200 Australian organisations have developed a Reconciliation Action Plan meaning that over 20% of Australia’s working age population (5.6 million people) are employed in organisations that have strategic plans to promote engagement with and action in support of Indigenous Australians (Reconciliation Australia, 2024). Together

these professional body and industry initiatives place expectations on universities in the training of graduates to ensure that they gain knowledge of and develop capabilities to work effectively for and with Indigenous Australians (Universities Australia, 2011b).

Indigenising curricula: the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of different approaches

Sector-wide calls to embed Indigenous perspectives in curricula in Australia began with the work of the Indigenous Higher Education and Advisory Council (IHEAC) in 2007 and have been periodically reinforced by the Bradley Review (Bradley et al., 2008), universities Australia in their *National best practice framework for Indigenous cultural competency* and their 2017–20 and 2022–5 strategy documents (Universities Australia, 2011b, 2017, 2022), and most recently in the Universities Accord Final Report (O’Kane et al., 2024). While on the whole Australian universities are committed to progressing this work (Ma Rhea, 2013; Universities Australia, 2020) there is significant variability around how they interpret and approach this initiative. Differences arise in what to embed, how to embed, who should do this work and the institutional commitment and resources available to do the work.

Beginning with the how and what, Page et al. (2019a) explain that ‘the process of embedding Indigenous content into an existing curriculum is often called Indigenising the curriculum’ (p.3). Nakata (2007) depicts Indigenising curricula as incorporating a ‘discernible ‘Indigenous voice’ ‘as Indigenous people insert their own narratives, critique, research, and knowledge production into the corpus’ (p.8). Anderson et al., (2023) describe it as ‘embedding Indigenous cultural competencies within the broad graduate attributes and ensuring that graduates engage with Indigenous content and develop the capacity to work effectively with Indigenous peoples to address inequities and promote social justice’ (p. 9). A closer examination of the literature suggests that there exist three broad aspects to Indigenising curricula, i.e., *Indigenous knowledges*, *Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies* and *knowledge of Indigenous peoples, history, context and contemporary realities*.

In line with Article 11 of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples, we define Indigenous *knowledges* as specific to people and place and to be inclusive of cultural traditions, customs, language, stories, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, performing arts and historical sites (United Nations General Assembly, 2007). Accordingly, Indigenous *knowledges* belong to Indigenous peoples and therefore can only be shared by those who have the relevant cultural authority or with the appropriate permissions. As Nakata (2007) notes, it is important that Indigenous knowledges should not be ‘disembodied from the people who are its agents’ (p. 9). Embedding Indigenous *knowledges* in curricula therefore requires institutional investment in Indigenous staff.

The second aspect that arises in the literature on Indigenous curricula relates to the need to acknowledge and include *differing worldviews and perspectives*. A perspective can be defined as a particular way of regarding situations, facts, etc., and judging their relative importance (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). In educational institutions Western knowledge is viewed as normative, whereas other ways of knowing are often devalued as unscientific (Anderson et al., 2022; Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2019). Added to this, much of Australian history and social practice is viewed through the lens (or perspective) of an

Anglo-Australian discourse (Young et al., 2017). Similar situations exist in other colonised nations.

Gainsford et al. (2021) argue that including Indigenous perspectives and worldviews in curriculum enables all students to consider a range of viewpoints from different perspectives and provides an environment where differences can be considered, and social tolerance can be fostered (p. 15). Acton et al. (2017) suggest that both the ‘curriculum and teaching practice should be inclusive of ontological and epistemological plurality’ arguing that this ‘willingness to welcome, accept and value diverse ways of being and understanding’ can create ‘a safe space that values each perspective, allowing comparison, analysis and questioning’ (p.1318). A range of teaching and learning strategies have been identified as supportive of ‘exemplifying Indigenous ways of being and knowing, and for supporting Indigenous students’ as well as aiding ‘non-Indigenous learners to develop a broader understanding of Indigenous perspectives and experiences’ (Acton et al., 2017, p. 1319). These include storytelling, modelling, viewing personal narratives, yarning circles, guest presenters, experiential learning such as on-Country experiences, collaborative learning and reflective practice (Acton et al., 2017; Universities Australia, 2011b).

The third aspect in Indigenising curricula relates to *knowledge of* the cultural, historic and contemporary contexts that influence the lives of Indigenous Australians (Universities Australia, 2011b) or Indigenous peoples globally. This includes coverage of colonisation, dispossession and government policies such as assimilation and ongoing forms of colonialism. It should also highlight Indigenous strength and resilience and promote the right to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination (Johnston, 2020).

The “how” to Indigenise the curricula can vary significantly across and within institutions and can encompass one, two or all three aspects outlined above. For example, on-Country learning experiences (also termed Place-based learning or situated learning) delivered by local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people typically provide non-Indigenous students (and/or staff) with an immersive introduction to the local Indigenous culture and history (i.e., Indigenous *knowledges*). Further these intensive transformative learning experience enable students to engage with and reflect on *differing perspectives and worldviews* (see, for example, Gainsford, 2018; Thorpe et al., 2021; Wilson & Spillman, 2022; Young et al., 2017). Approaches that focus on embedding *knowledge of* Indigenous history and contemporary realities can be delivered to learners via standalone subjects or modules or via content embedded contextually into the discipline across a few core subjects in a course or program of study. Curation and delivery of this content can be carried out by either Indigenous or non-Indigenous staff, with the latter ideally having received professional development training and support and guidance from Indigenous stakeholders. If delivered by non-Indigenous teaching staff, Indigenous voices can be championed through a choice of articles, videos and case studies and also incorporated through the inclusion of guest lectures.

The next ‘how’ decision facing institutions is the extent to which Indigenous perspectives are embedded in curricula across the institution. Certain institutions have adopted an Indigenous graduate attribute approach which requires all students to acquire knowledge of Indigenous perspectives and develop skills and capabilities to engage with Indigenous Australians regardless of the discipline area. Other approaches include elective Indigenous studies majors offered in discipline areas such as education, social

work or health; Indigenous subjects taught (primarily) by Indigenous staff as a compulsory inclusion in some or all discipline areas; standalone Indigenous competency modules developed by Indigenous academics, or transformative place-based learning immersions offered to specific cohorts of students. While there appears to be no singular blueprint for this endeavour, universities tend to adapt their approach based on the resources at their disposal to fulfil Indigenous curriculum requirements. Resourcing is discussed further in a subsequent section of this paper.

Challenges to embedding Indigenous perspectives: the ‘who’ and institutional commitments and resourcing

Despite the sectoral recommendations and scholarly advocacy for this work, Indigenising curricula remain challenging in the face of a number of institutional barriers and constraints. The first challenge is determining who should do this work to ensure that it is done ethically and responsibly. Bullen and Flavell (2017) argue that ‘in the rush to “Indigenise the curriculum” there has been a tendency to assume almost anyone can teach effectively in this space’ (p. 590). Misrepresentation, perpetuation of deficit narratives and stereotypes, and misappropriation of intellectual property rights and cultural protocols are some of the concerns that arise if the process is not managed appropriately (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2019, 2024; Manton et al., 2023) or when Indigenous content is simply ‘plonked’ into the curriculum without careful consideration (Nakata, 2007, p. 8). Often the responsibility falls to the small number of Indigenous academics employed in the sector who frequently find themselves overburdened with expectations that they will mentor, advise and collaborate and/or be the ones who must design and deliver Indigenous content (Delbridge et al., 2022) without always having specialist curriculum skills (Page et al., 2016). This cultural load is frequently layered on top of their existing workload (Raciti, 2021). Further, Bullen and Flavell (2017) highlight the significant emotional labour and resilience this work requires of Indigenous people who repeatedly share traumatic and confronting stories while managing both overt and covert racism.

While non-Indigenous academics can be trained to teach *knowledge of* Indigenous perspectives and introduce students to *differing world views*, these staff can often be disengaged, hesitant, or lack confidence to deliver this material (Page et al., 2019a; Wolfe et al., 2018; Young et al., 2017). For example, Burns (2013) reports how many non-Indigenous unit coordinators in law programs felt they did not have sufficient knowledge or skills to effectively teach Indigenous content, reported discomfort in knowing how to deal with racism, and were concerned about offending Indigenous Australians in their delivery. Other barriers noted include ‘stubborn adherence to established’ curriculum (Burns et al., 2019, p. 18), reluctance to change, tokenism, lack of knowledge, resources, direction and leadership commitment (Kennedy et al., 2021; Raciti, 2021; Ranzijn et al., 2008). Norman (2014) contrastingly reports a willingness among non-Indigenous academics to do the work but also nervousness around how to ‘do it well’ (p. 50). Indigenous cultural competency training programs are not mandatory in universities, may not be widely available, or may not be strongly aligned to curriculum content (Anderson et al., 2022; Universities Australia, 2011b).

Scholars argue that for this work to be done well it requires the development of well-defined curricula guidance frameworks under a whole-of-institution approach

with senior executive support, clear policy and governance processes, adequate resourcing and staff professional development (Acton et al., 2017; Behrendt et al., 2012; Universities Australia, 2011b). Gainsford and Evans (2017) advise that in relation to Indigenising curricula, ‘implementing changes to the core business of universities requires many parties aligned under a clear direction and committed to achieving a cultural change agenda’ (p.61). Goerke and Kickett (2013) stress that the alignment between policies, programs, practice and professional development within institutions is pivotal for initiatives to be successful. Without such policy support, staff engagement in this critical area is likely to be limited and inadequate to assure implementation. Thus, the establishment of robust policies and compliance requirements is not only beneficial but pivotal to the successful integration of Indigenous content into the curriculum.

In summary, sectoral and scholarly calls to Indigenise the Australian higher education curricula are underpinned by national social justice and reconciliation priorities and the need to produce graduates capable of working effectively for and with Indigenous peoples in a range of professional contexts. Institutional responses have varied both in focus and in the extent to which they embed this content across curricula in the face of challenges including a shortage of Indigenous staff, lack of leadership commitment, inadequate resourcing, insufficient training and development for non-Indigenous staff and the absence of well-developed curriculum frameworks. We now move to a discussion of the approach undertaken at the University of Technology Sydney, which was designed specifically to mitigate these identified challenges.

The UTS approach

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) decided to pursue an integrated whole-of-university approach to embedding Indigenous perspectives via an Indigenous graduate attribute. Graduate attributes are categories of fundamental skills, people skills and thinking skills (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013) aligned to employability requirements (Page et al., 2019b). Both sectoral bodies and Indigenous scholars have recommended graduate attribute approaches as central to ensuring that Australians across all discipline areas contribute to economic productivity by developing the capacity to work with Indigenous peoples and communities (Bradley et al., 2008; Page et al., 2019a; Universities Australia, 2011b) in a professionally competent manner (Ranzijn et al., 2008). In this section, we detail the history of UTS’s efforts to embed Indigenous content, revealing that for institutions this work takes time and ongoing efforts across many stakeholders. We stress the importance of supportive leadership, adequate resourcing, governance, policy, compliance and monitoring to successful achievement of this initiative.

This work began over a decade ago when UTS formally endorsed the establishment of an Indigenous Graduate Attribute Framework during the Academic Board Meeting held on 5 November 2013 (Page et al., 2016, p. 260). The development process was guided by deliberations within the Indigenous Studies Committee and was significantly informed by the insights of senior leaders at that time, as evidenced by Sherwood et al. (2013). A central recommendation emphasised that UTS graduates should acquire a professional capability to engage effectively when working for and with Indigenous peoples within

their respective industries upon graduation. This professional practice focus has been a key aspect of the Indigenous graduate attribute at UTS since its inception.

In 2015, esteemed Indigenous scholars Michelle Trudgett, Susan Page and Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews joined UTS and established the Centre for Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges. This pivotal centre played a crucial role in laying the groundwork for the UTS Indigenous graduate attribute during its nascent stages (see Page et al., 2019a, 2019b). The foundational efforts encompassed several key components, including fostering robust relationships, navigating institutional processes particularly those related to teaching and learning decision-making and subsequently formulating an Indigenous graduate attribute integration plan and the required frameworks (Page et al., 2019a). The scholars in the centre played a fundamental role in integrating the Indigenous graduate Attribute in UTS courses from 2015 to 2021. Additionally, these scholars actively engaged in research areas to advance Indigenous scholarship and community-led initiatives by incorporating Indigenous content, perspectives and methodologies into both research and teaching practices. Due to staff changes, the responsibility for Indigenous graduate attribute was transferred to the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor for Indigenous Leadership and Engagement in 2021.

In line with recommendations that efforts to embed Indigenous curricula be supported by policy (Gainsford & Evans, 2017; Goerke & Kickett, 2013; Ranzijn et al., 2008), the UTS Indigenous Policy was approved in 2019. Underpinned by the philosophical principle that Indigenous education is for all Australians, it commits the university to two important objectives, i.e.

- 4.12 (4) *develop Indigenous competency among its students by creating an environment in which all UTS students have the opportunity to gain knowledge of Indigenous Australians*
- 4.12 (5) *ensure that all UTS graduates have a professional capacity to work with and for Indigenous Australians.*

These policy objectives were further reinforced in the UTS Indigenous Education and Research Strategy 2019–2023 which put forth the strategic aim that by 2023:

- 2.4 *We will also have a nationally significant Indigenous Graduate Attribute (IGA) commitment, one that will make an important contribution to the professions and will bear close scrutiny by Indigenous professionals.*

In 2021, UTS appointed Dr Annette Gainsford as Associate Dean for Indigenous Teaching and Learning. The appointment signalled an institutional commitment to curriculum, via a dedicated portfolio, not split between research or student support, or teaching. Together with the support and guidance from the then Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous (Leadership and Engagement), Emeritus Professor Michael McDaniel, the duo developed a strategic blueprint to progress the Indigenous graduate attribute and overcome or avoid a number of the challenges or barriers identified to Indigenous curricula identified in the literature, i.e., the need for a comprehensive pedagogical framework, the shortage of Indigenous scholars, the need for policy, governance, monitoring and compliance, the need for a clear process for implementation, adequate

resourcing and support and the need for professional development training for non-Indigenous scholars. Each of these will now be discussed.

IGA Curriculum Framework

The initial task of the Associate Dean, Indigenous Teaching and Learning was to lead the development of a revised pedagogical framework that could guide the embedding of Indigenous content and perspectives in curricula aligned to professional capabilities required by graduates to work for and with Indigenous Australians in the workplace. The resultant UTS Indigenous Graduate Attribute Curriculum Framework, finalised by Gainsford and McDaniel in 2021 (refer to [Table 1](#)), aligns with the Australian Qualifications Framework and offers recommended curriculum content across the criteria levels of Knowledge, Skills and Application. Other key changes to the prior framework developed by Page et al. (2019a) include the ability to adapt the framework to varying qualification levels, including flexibility for content and assessments to be aligned to program length, thus allowing shorter courses such as graduate certificates to introduce, develop and assure in one subject. The development of this revised framework was underpinned by recommendations outlined by Ranzijn et al. (2008) as well as in the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (Universities Australia, 2011b) principles of constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011) and draws on earlier work by Gainsford and Evans (2017), Gainsford (2018) and Gerard et al. (2018).

Table 1. UTS Indigenous Graduate Attribute Curriculum Framework (Gainsford & McDaniel, 2021.).

UTS Indigenous Graduate Attribute		
Curriculum Framework		
"UTS graduates will have knowledge of Indigenous Australian contexts to inform their capability to work effectively for and with Indigenous Australians across their professional discipline"		
Knowledge	Skills	Application
Knowledge of cultural, historic, and contemporary contexts that influence the lives of Indigenous Australians.	Examine the nature of the profession and critically reflect on the intersection between Indigenous Australian engagement, experience, and achievement within the profession.	Apply knowledge and skills relating to Indigenous Australians contexts to inform capabilities to work for and with Indigenous Australians within a professional discipline.
Content	Content	Content
Curriculum that enables students to develop knowledge of Indigenous Australian contexts to provide contextual understanding through the following areas:	Curriculum that enables students to develop skills relating to the profession through:	Curriculum that enables students to apply skills to build their professional capabilities to work effectively with and for Indigenous Australians across such areas as:
Evaluating the impact of historical contexts such as colonisation and dispossession.	Examining the historic contribution and role of the profession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional relationships and communication. Professional attitudes and approaches. Professional actions and processes.
Critically reflecting on the contemporary socio-economic legacies across areas such as education, health, employment, housing, and incarceration.	Critically reflecting on the power relations and experience of Indigenous Australians across the profession such as stereotyping, racism and discrimination.	
Identifying different forms of racial discrimination and critically reflecting on the impact experienced by Indigenous Australians.	Critically reflecting on the successful contribution and self-determination practices of Indigenous peoples across the profession.	
Exploring the sophistication and ingenuity of Indigenous knowledges.	Critically reflecting on values, attitudes and assumptions relating to differing cultural contexts across the profession.	

This Indigenous Graduate Attribute Curriculum Framework was approved by Academic Board in March 2022 and since this date has served as a foundational structure to guide course teams in the embedding of Indigenous content and perspectives within courses, contextualised to specific disciplines and at the required Australian Qualifications Framework level. As mentioned above, the framework's approach prioritises developing students' professional capabilities to work for and with Indigenous Australians, relevant to their respective professional requirements. These professional capabilities include

- (1) Professional relationships and communication; i.e., communicating and engaging with Indigenous Australians as clients, colleagues, or business partners
- (2) Professional attitudes and approaches: professional capabilities to examine bias, recognise diverse perspectives and world views, self-reflect and awareness of positionality
- (3) Professional actions and processes: capabilities to influence organisational and systemic change, problem solving, ethical practice, governance and compliance.

When developing the revised framework, a central consideration was that non-Indigenous academic staff should be able to teach Indigenous content and perspectives, thus making it scalable across all UTS courses. This was crucial to address the shortage of Indigenous scholars (Page et al., 2016), minimise the cultural load on Indigenous academics (Bullen & Flavell, 2017) and to enable the Indigenous graduate attribute to be attainable by all graduates from all of the university's 500+ courses.

The focus therefore is on embedding Indigenous perspectives and knowledge of Indigenous contexts, histories and contemporary reality as they relate to the specific discipline areas. This includes showcasing the sophistication and ingenuity of Indigenous Australians in each discipline. For example, in biotechnology the contribution of Indigenous medicines and plants and the need to protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) is addressed. In quantum physics, the intersection between Aboriginal kinship systems is examined. In fashion, the contributions of Indigenous Australian including the use and procurement of sustainable material alongside the rich heritage of design, innovation, production and trade is highlighted.

In developing student skills, the focus is on ethical practice when engaging with Indigenous Australians such as appropriate communication and engagement strategies, the importance of free, prior and informed consent, the need to recognise and promote self-determination, protection of ICIP, acknowledgement of and engagement with diverse world views and actions to facilitate authentic partnerships. This baseline content can be complemented by Faculties depending on the resources and/or availability of Indigenous staff to deliver Indigenous *knowledges*, offer transformative on-Country programs or include further content on Indigenous *ontologies and epistemologies*.

Policy, process, governance, compliance and monitoring

In response to scholarly recommendations that efforts to Indigenise the curricula be supported via policy, governance, monitoring and compliance mechanisms (Gainsford & Evans, 2017; Goerke & Kickett, 2013; Universities Australia, 2011b), a comprehensive

process was established to integrate the framework into the University's core curriculum governance processes. As outlined earlier, the policy supporting the Indigenous graduate attribute was established in 2019. A UTS Indigenous Graduate Attribute Course Implementation Phased Approach Model was developed in 2021 to guide academics across four phases for implementation of Indigenous content in curricula, i.e., compliance, subject mapping, subject development and assessment (see [Table 2](#)).

Table 2. UTS Indigenous graduate attribute phased approach model (Gainsford, 2021).

UTS Indigenous Graduate Attributes			
Indigenous Graduate Attribute Course Implementation Phased Approach "UTS graduates will have knowledge of Indigenous Australian contexts to inform their capability to work effectively for and with Indigenous Australians across their professional discipline"			
Indigenous Consultation * Indigenous Teaching and Learning Team * Indigenous Associate Deans			
1. Compliance	2. Mapping	3. Content	4. Assess
IGA Compliance ICILO Compliance IGA that links to UTS IGA ICILO that links to UTS IGA AQF level compliance	IGA Mapping in Core Subjects Curriculum Framework Knowledge Skills Application Curriculum Mapping Introduced Developed Assured	IGA Content Development Modules/Topics Indigenous literature/resources Indigenous industry standards Industry experts Indigenous academics Indigenous alumni Indigenous PhD students Indigenous community engagement	IGA Assess and Assure Assessment Moderation Marking rubrics
IGA Professional Development			

Phase 1 of the compliance process requires the development of an Indigenous course learning outcome that is focused on building students' professional capability to work for and with Indigenous Australians across the profession. *Phase 2* requires course teams to develop an Indigenous graduate attribute implementation plan which maps the graduate attribute across core course subjects and demonstrates where the elements of knowledge, skills and application are to be introduced, developed and assured in accordance with the relevant Australian Qualifications Framework level. *Phase 3* requires course teams to embed Indigenous curriculum content across the identified core subject's modules/topics. This part of the development phase includes evaluating relevant professional standards or frameworks (for example, the 2014 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework) and identifying the specific industry-determined professional capabilities expected of graduates to work with and for Indigenous Australians across the profession. Consultation with Indigenous curriculum stakeholders such as academics, industry experts and

community members is recommended to guide and influence Indigenous curriculum development and identify opportunities to include authentic and ‘discernible Indigenous voices’ (Nakata, 2007). *Phase 4* requires course teams to design specific assessments to assure the Indigenous course learning outcomes and to demonstrate ways in which students are being assessed across criteria of knowledge, skills and application. The assessment establishes a constructive alignment between the intended learning outcome, the subject content taught and the assessment criteria related to the professional capability focus of the Indigenous graduate attribute. The Indigenous Teaching and Learning Team (see below) plays a pivotal role in assisting with plan development, review and endorsement for submission to the University’s Courses Accreditation Committee. After review and approval by the Courses Accreditation Committee (which includes the Pro-Vice Chancellor Indigenous Leadership and Engagement or nominee as a member), the plan proceeds to implementation within the faculty in preparation for delivery.

Indigenous-led resourcing and support

In 2022, the university reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Indigenous graduate attribute by allocating additional resources to support the Associate Dean, Indigenous Teaching and Learning. This commitment was demonstrated in the formation of a dedicated team, composed of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous education academics, tasked with providing support to the discipline-based course team academics. The team’s collective goal is to ensure the successful implementation of the Indigenous graduate attribute. Team members work in partnership with faculty-based discipline teams and provide curriculum-design guidance and support on the Indigenous graduate attribute implementation. Team members assist with the selection of resources prioritising those that are Indigenous authored or produced in consultation with Indigenous stakeholders. To ensure all curriculum content has Indigenous consultation, the team meets weekly to collaboratively review Indigenous graduate attribute course plans and provide feedback to faculty academics and course teams on their development. In this way, the Indigenous Teaching and Learning Team aims to address organisational needs outlined by Wolfe et al. (2018), i.e., by providing guidance on ‘what to teach, where (in the curriculum) to teach it and how to teach it’ while helping discipline-based academic staff access-appropriate resources ‘to teach the content’ (p.655).

Indigenous capability professional development training

In addition to supporting course teams going through accreditation, the Indigenous Teaching and Learning Team provides professional development to staff across the University in the form of two differing workshops designed to align with academic needs (see Figure 1). The delivery of these workshops is a direct response to scholarly recommendations for training to enhance non-Indigenous staff capability and confidence to teach Indigenous content (Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2019; Page et al., 2019a; Raciti, 2021; Wolfe et al., 2018).

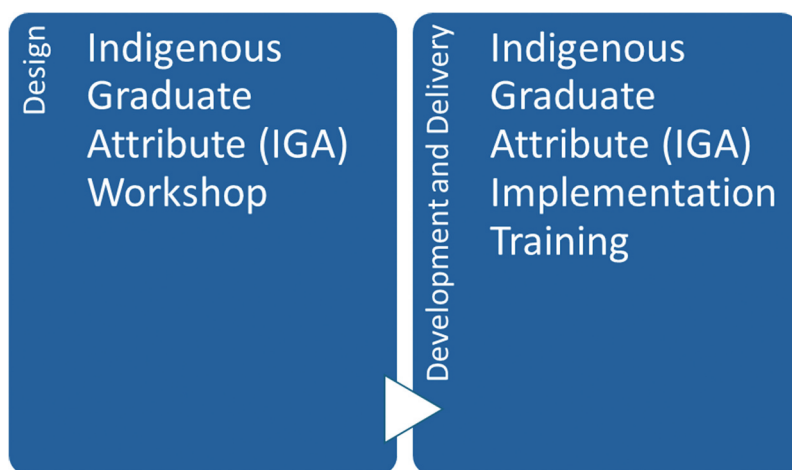


Figure 1. Indigenous capability professional development training.

Beginning with ‘Design’ this first workshop is delivered monthly and operates as an introductory training session for course coordinators and their academic colleagues who are about to embark on course re-accreditation. It introduces these course teams to the UTS Indigenous graduate attribute, and its supporting policy and governance processes, explains the process in relation to the development of an Indigenous graduate attribute curriculum plan, outlines completion requirements and expected time frames and directs staff to available resources including Indigenous Teaching and Learning Team support and the SharePoint website.

Once the plan is in place (i.e., approved by Courses Accreditation Committee), course teams are then invited to participate in additional professional development led by the Associate Dean for Indigenous Teaching and Learning. This training aims to build confidence and capacity of teaching staff to deliver the Indigenous graduate attribute content, manage the classroom and provide feedback to students on assessments. In accordance with recommendations by Indigenous scholars it begins by encouraging staff to examine their own positionality and knowledge of Indigenous Australia (Gainsford & Robertson, 2019; Raciti, 2021). In addition to being provided with a suite of resources and suggested activities that can be utilised in the development of their subject modules, staff are taught how to source appropriate resources that privilege Indigenous voice and promote strength-based approaches. Lastly, the workshop provides teaching staff with strategies and resources for developing and ensuring culturally safe virtual and face-to-face classroom practices.

Intranet site

The final part of this multipronged support delivered to facilitate the embedding of the Indigenous graduate attribute is a dedicated SharePoint site that includes a comprehensive suite of resources available for staff use. This includes information, templates, exemplar implementation plans, a toolkit of internally and externally published Indigenous led resources, Indigenous Teaching and Learning Team profiles and

contact details, and dates and booking facilities for professional development training. Additional artefacts are continually being added as the Indigenous Teaching and Learning Team work collaboratively with academic course teams and receive advice and feedback on their needs.

Discussion

This case example of the UTS Indigenous graduate attribute illustrates how a single Australian university has responded to sectoral and scholarly calls to ensure all students engage with Indigenous Australian content in curriculum and build capabilities to work for and with Indigenous peoples and communities (Behrendt et al., 2012; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2024; Universities Australia, 2011b). At UTS, the successful integration of an Indigenous graduate attribute via a whole-of-institution approach has been an iterative and elongated process, as illustrated in Figure 2. While the initial concept was first approved in 2013 it took further 2 years before a team of Indigenous scholars were employed to begin the groundwork and further years before the Indigenous graduate attribute became firm policy. Since 2021, with the appointment of the Associate Dean, Indigenous Teaching and Learning, the university has demonstrated renewed and unwavering commitment to this important work by allocating resources towards the employment of a dedicated team of curriculum specialists, supporting governance, compliance and monitoring processes, and funding the delivery of the required professional

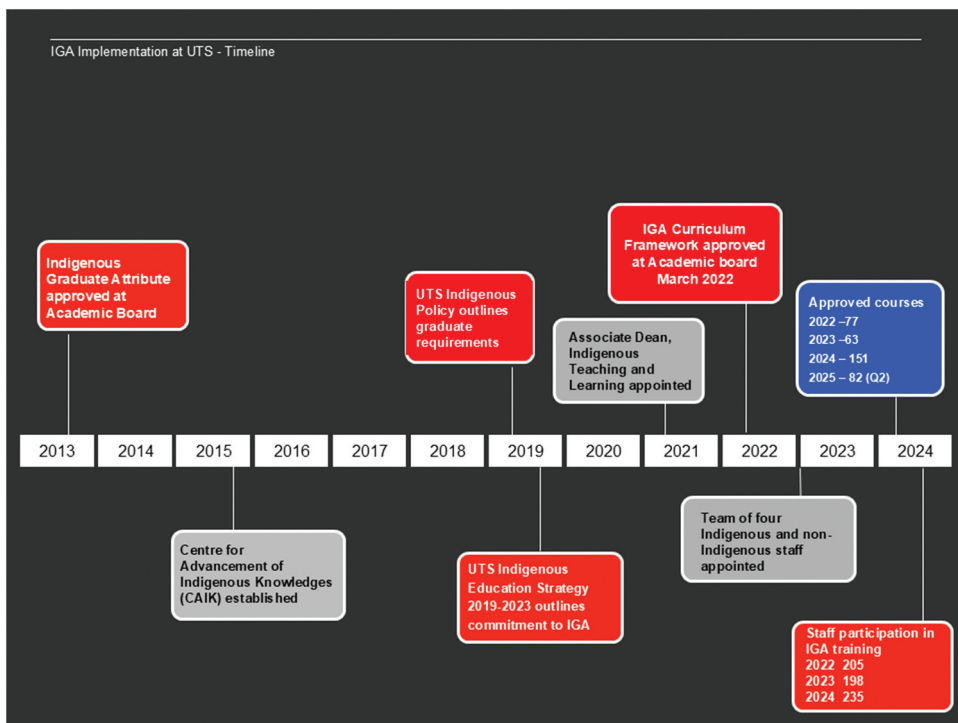


Figure 2. UTS Indigenous graduate attribute implementation timeline.

development. This commitment has been a pivotal factor in the successful implementation of this strategic approach to embedding an Indigenous graduate attribute and supports arguments by Indigenous scholars for the need for top down, whole of institution, sustainable approaches to Indigenising curricula (Behrendt et al., 2012; Gainsford & Evans, 2017; Goerke & Kickett, 2013).

As can be seen in Figure 2, over 350 of UTS's 500+ courses have now been through the re-accreditation process and have embedded Indigenous content and assessments aligned to professional practice. This includes course in disciplines as diverse as engineering, information technology, science, business, health, law, social science, communication, built environment, education and transdisciplinary programs.

The strategic approach developed by Indigenous leaders at UTS and rolled out progressively over the past 4 years incorporates several aspects designed to mitigate the challenges to Indigenising the curricula. Importantly, prioritising embedding *knowledge of* Indigenous contexts, histories and contemporary realities aligned to each discipline, this helps avoid perceptions that the content is just 'add on' or tokenistic (Young et al., 2017). Instead, the professional practice focus of the Indigenous graduate attribute at UTS engages both academics and staff around industry relevant development and application of knowledge and skills. Further, this approach provides flexibility for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff to deliver Indigenous content in curriculum. As such it enables the work to be achieved at scale and overcomes the challenge of insufficient Indigenous academic staff to deliver Indigenous content identified by Page et al. (2016) and helps alleviate some of the cultural burden faced by Indigenous staff (Bullen & Flavell, 2017; Raciti, 2021).

Another advantage of the UTS Indigenous Graduate Attribute Curriculum Framework and implementation process is that it provides the flexibility to allow for

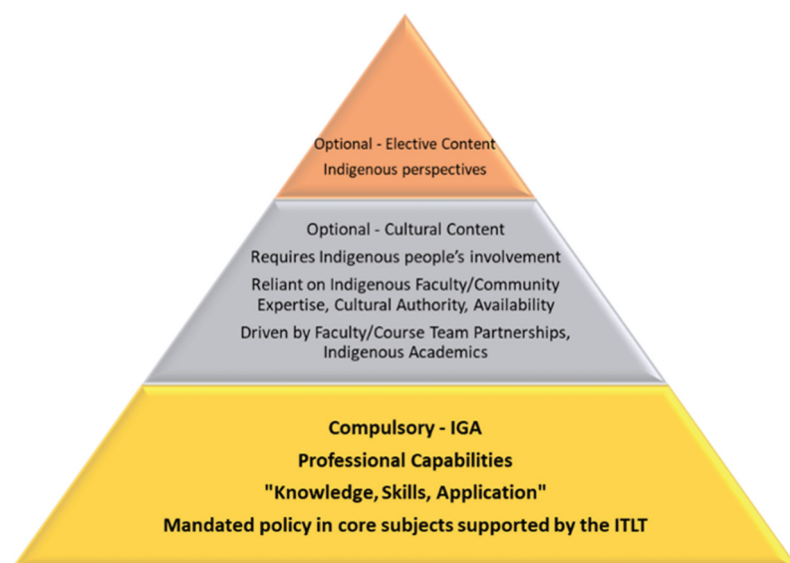


Figure 3. Layered aspects to indigenous graduate attribute content in curricula at UTS. Source: Gainsford (2021).

inclusion of all three aspects of Indigenising the curriculum, i.e., Indigenous *knowledges*, Indigenous *worldviews* and *knowledge of* Indigenous contexts. Figure 3 illustrates this flexibility. The gold baseline of the triangle represents the compulsory content embedded in core subjects to enable students to achieve the Indigenous graduate attribute. Whilst this gold section is primarily focused on *knowledge of* Indigenous contexts, discernible Indigenous voices are also be embedded via resources and videos. This ensures Indigenous perspectives, including those challenging dominant Western paradigms, are incorporated contextually into the curriculum. Assessments favour critical reflexivity to encourage students to look in the mirror at their own knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and engagement with Indigenous peoples, knowledge and contexts. The silver mid-section of the triangle represents optional additional content delivered by faculty-based Indigenous academics where available. Workload permitting, these staff can enrich the curriculum by providing an authentic Indigenous voice via inclusion of their own perspectives, stories and, if appropriate, their own cultural knowledge (Nakata, 2007). Alternate or additional content may be delivered via the inclusion of guest speakers or on-Country experiences and/or supported through community partnerships where faculty funds allow (see, for example, Manton et al., 2023). The top bronze layer represents content that may be embedded in elective subjects at the faculty's discretion.

An additional success factor in this strategic approach is the establishment of a dedicated team of curriculum specialists to support UTS course teams in the implementation of the Indigenous graduate attribute across its more than 500 courses. Adequate resourcing has been identified by Gainsford and Robertson (2019), Page et al. (2016) and Wolfe et al. (2018) among others (see Universities Australia, 2011b) as crucial. The employment of non-Indigenous staff alongside Indigenous staff under the leadership of an Indigenous Associate Dean Teaching and Learning provides an exemplar model to demonstrate how Indigenising curricula can be achieved through a collaborative approach. Faculty-based academic staff have reported favourably on the benefit of this relational, collegial and supportive model (Attree et al., 2023). Finally, the delivery of a suite of professional development workshops (supplemented by an internal resource site) aimed to build academic capacity to design, develop and deliver the Indigenous content has been purposefully developed in response to calls in the literature for adequate training and development of academic staff (Raciti, 2021, Wolfe et al., 2018).

Conclusion

Increasing social, scholarly and sectoral demands for graduates with the professional capability to work for and with Indigenous peoples to advance social justice and reconciliation agendas has seen universities respond in a range of ways. Challenges to the progression of this work include decisions on how to meaningfully embed Indigenous perspectives in crowded curricula, the limited availability of Indigenous staff and inadequate resourcing. The UTS case illustrates the importance of a strategic, integrated, whole-of-institution approach to achieving substantive progress. Indeed, we suggest that if university leaders are serious about advancing a decolonising agenda, they must demonstrate their commitment through investment in staff and training, embedding these requirements in policy and governance and actively monitoring and championing the work through institutional processes.

In putting forward this case example, we acknowledge that UTS is fortunate to have strong senior Indigenous leadership as well as the support of the Vice Chancellor who has championed this work. We also acknowledge that we are only at the very beginning of our journey of Indigenising the curricula and that change is an iterative process. Our approach has been to begin with a strong foundation of embedded Indigenous content that can be taught by all staff before moving to more transformative approaches to Indigenising the curricula. Finally, we acknowledge that the effectiveness of these initiatives will be carefully evaluated over the coming years as our students acquire capabilities, graduate and progress to the workforce.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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