ACGR Good Practice Guidelines for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Education

February, 2026

ACGR

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, seas and waters across this nation, and pay our deepest respects to their Elders — past, present and emerging. We recognise and honour the enduring connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold to Country, culture, language and knowledge, and we celebrate the generations of First Nations peoples who have cared for Country and sustained rich systems of learning across countless lifetimes.

As the Australian Council of Graduate Research, we acknowledge that true learning is woven through community, ceremony and story, passed down from Elders to young people, and strengthened by collective responsibility and respect. We are committed to listening, learning and working in genuine partnership with Indigenous communities to support Indigenous-led research, to protect and amplify Indigenous knowledges, and to ensure that education is shared in ways that are culturally safe, reciprocal and enduring.

We honour the resilience, wisdom and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to research and education, and we pledge to nurture opportunities that allow knowledge to be handed on — for the benefit of current and future generations.

Using the guidelines

These guidelines have been collaboratively developed by the Australian Council of Graduate Research (ACGR) with appreciated support and advice from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC). The Guidelines provide credible, constructive and practical advice for candidates, supervisors, universities and other stakeholders. They should be read alongside the *Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles* which articulate a set of standards considered to be essential for the delivery of graduate research programs and are part of a suite of Good Practice Guidelines that are designed to support institutions as they develop their strategies and processes in particular important areas of operation. They should also be read alongside the AITSIS Guidelines (https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/aiatsis-code-ethics.pdf).

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Message from NATSIHEC

The *ACGR Good Practice Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Education* were developed in collaboration with NATSIHEC. NATSIHEC supports the guidelines and the commitment to creating a national university landscape that is conducive to the successful journeys of current and future Indigenous HDR candidates, and the contributions these scholars will make globally. The Guidelines recognise the knowledge production and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that has sustained the survival of the longest living culture in the world. The Guidelines aspire to build on these legacies creating opportunities for increasing the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within universities and beyond. We look forward to a continued respectful and reciprocal relationship with ACGR in ensuring the ongoing advancement of Indigenous graduate research education outcomes.

Recommendations

ACGR makes the following recommendations to Universities:

Prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research education

1. Universities should recognise Indigenous knowledge systems, epistemologies, methods of documentation, and accountability structures for research and broaden their HDR protocols, such as thesis format, to support such research.

2. Ensure that the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate research is recognised across all levels of university governance and is supported by an explicit policy framework.

3. Establish ambitious but realistic targets for recruitment, retention, support and graduation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates and report on these as part of an adaptive management cycle.

4. Recognise that Indigenous HDR candidates can have distinctive pathways and skills sets that should be considered when assessing applications for admission to HDR programs.

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5. Recognise and celebrate the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates at an institutional level.

Support Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research.

6. Universities should ensure all levels of study and administration engage effectively with Indigenous alumni, academics, university Indigenous centres, institutions and community groups, ensuring pathways to develop a recruitment strategy whereby research degrees are visible, resourced and welcoming.

7. Establish pathways and support the transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to increase participation in HDR programs.

8. Conduct outreach programs to demonstrate the value of HDR education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the value of this research for their communities.

9. Develop culturally appropriate pathways to HDR admission that recognise prior learning, professional experience and community engagement.

10. Establish stipend scholarships that meet the unique cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates.

11. Universities may provide opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates to provide appropriately renumerated high-value services to their schools and faculties.

12. Provide flexible entry pathways that include bridging programs and recognize professional practice during the selection process.

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Maximising supervision capabilities

13. Equip supervisors with necessary training to support Indigenous research methodologies in the supervision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates.

14. Equip supervisors with necessary training to provide ethical guidance to non-Indigenous HDR candidates undertaking Indigenous-related research.

15. Where possible and where there is capacity include an appropriately qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supervisor on supervisory panel and using appropriately qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander examiners wherever appropriate.

16. Improve peer networks for all supervisors to share learnings and approaches.

17. All Supervisors demonstrate respect for Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies.

Recommending, supporting and promoting culturally-competent engagement and opportunities

18. Provide welcoming, supportive and culturally safe environments.

19. Develop initiatives that encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates' families and communities to support them.

20. Establish support networks of senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics within and across institutions.

21. Encourage connections to community mentors, Elders and/or expert cultural knowledge holders.

22. Provide cohort support at the level of institutions and institutional groupings and encourage candidates to join national and international peer networks.

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23. Provide mentoring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates who seek this within their candidature.

24. Develop a dedicated website or other online resources that facilitate peer networking and inform candidates of the support available both within the university and through national programs such as the [National Indigenous Research and Knowledge Network](#)

25. Support Universities to provide culturally safe and appropriate training for supervisors and HDR leaders who support Indigenous researchers.

26. Invest adequately in research capacity building programs that support successful progression and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates.

Promoting unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

27. Include workshops on Indigenous knowledges and intellectual property as part of the academic professional development of all HDR candidates and supervisors.

28. Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and global First Nations scholarship in relevant coursework subjects.

29. Recognise, support and promote supervisors' awareness of relevant national research ethics guidelines, such as the [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#).

Providing careers assistance programs that recognise and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers

30. Higher education providers should develop career resources and provide mentoring in relation to career opportunities that recognise the skills and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates and ensure that resources and advice are effectively implemented and up-to-date.

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31. Ensure the perspectives and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates are canvassed and resourced and practical assistance tailored to individual needs.

32. Engage with research end-users and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other First Nations community-based organisations and businesses where appropriate to develop partnerships and collaborative career opportunities for Indigenous HDR candidates, including industry internships.

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