

# Indigenous Student Success Program

## 2024 Performance Report

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### 1. Declaration

In providing this Performance Report, it is acknowledged that it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

### 2. Enrolments (Access)

As indicated in our previous report, Western has two well-established programs within the Future Student Engagement (FSE) portfolio, [Heartbeats and Pathways to Dreaming](#), designed to engage and promote access to university for Indigenous school students. These initiatives play a vital role in raising awareness of Higher Education opportunities and connecting students to the university environment. The programs are long-term school engagement initiatives delivered in collaboration with partner primary and secondary schools. Through a structured series of activities, these programs aim to build knowledge and aspiration throughout the students' academic journey, ultimately leading to increased and sustained enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Western Sydney University. These initiatives are largely university funded, however ISSP funds were used to procure a range of Indigenous branded materials in 2024, such as pencil cases and highlighters used to support our community engagement activities with school children. Similarly, ISSP funds were also used to create refreshed marketing materials, such as videos, printed and online materials used to support prospective student recruitment.

#### Heartbeat Program

In 2024, Heartbeat continued face to face program delivery with activities taking place both in partner primary schools and on Western Sydney University campuses. The Future Students Engagement (FSE) team delivered 101 in-school workshop sessions with 22 partner schools and 1066 program participants in years 3 through 6. The team also delivered 2 on-campus event days for 244 primary school students in years 5 and 6, along with 40 teachers from across Greater Western Sydney.

#### Pathways to Dreaming Program

In 2024, Pathways to Dreaming continued face to face program delivery with activities taking place both in partner high schools and on Western Sydney University campuses. The FSE team delivered 157 in-school workshop sessions (including senior consultations) with 51 schools and 1,097 program participants across the school year. The team also delivered 6 on-campus event days for 537 high school students, and 94 teachers from across Greater Western Sydney.

#### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathway Program

The [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathway Entry Program](#), is an alternative entry pathway into undergraduate degree level courses for Indigenous students. Applicants' complete assessments in Academic Literacy and Numeracy, to determine eligibility for offers. The program is available to current school leavers and mature age applicants and is delivered through the Open Learning online

platform. In 2024 Western made 248 offers for this program, a 12% increase on the substantial growth (108%) experienced in 2023. The continued success can be attributed to increased Indigenous Community Engagement activities, improvements to the promotion and applicant journey, and a focus on building relationships with applicants.

**Table 1 ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2024 payments<sup>1</sup>**

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total <sup>2</sup>	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling <sup>3</sup>								
Undergraduate <sup>4</sup>	236,375	111			14,000	2	250,375	113
Post-graduate <sup>5</sup>					14,000	2	14,000	2
Other								
<b>Total</b>	236,375	111			28,000	4	264,375	115

Western Sydney University recognises that a scholarship is an enrichment opportunity that provides a student more than just a financial benefit. Western Sydney University employs a case management approach for scholarship recipients and made changes to the eligibility criteria for the Indigenous Futures Scholarship (previously Indigenous Smart Start) to reduce barriers to accessing this one-off payment. This resulted in a substantial rise in acceptances and student payments, with 109 students receiving this scholarship in 2024 compared to 37 in 2023.

### Community and Partnership Events

The Indigenous Future Students Engagement team significantly increased Indigenous community engagement activities in 2024, attending 56 community-based events reaching over 5,000 Indigenous future students and community members. In collaboration with key external partners, Future Students collaborated to deliver on campus and community-based events, such as those outlined below.

<b>Unlocking Careers Events Series:</b> These events included range of discipline specific practical workshops and a live Yarn Up Q&A panel. Panel members, each Indigenous People with tertiary qualifications and successful careers in the sector from organisations across Western Sydney	
<b>Unlocking Careers in Sport and Health</b>	226 students from 67 schools participated (104% increase from 110 attendees in 2023)
<b>Unlocking Careers in Humanities &amp; Creative Industries</b>	99 students from 19 schools attended.
<b>Unlocking Careers in Science, Technology &amp; Engineering</b>	102 students from 34 schools participated.
<b>Waratah Project Indigenous Leadership conference</b>	180 Indigenous High School students from Years 8 – 10 from NSW Independent schools.
<b>NRL School to Work Indigenous Leadership Camp</b>	A three day, on-campus experience for 26 Year 12 Indigenous young people from Western Sydney, regional and rural NSW areas.
<b>Hawkesbury AECG Schools network Indigenous Oz Tag Gala Day</b>	150 Indigenous students from 5 local high schools attended, with 12 teachers and 5 local community organisations.
<b>Da Murrytoola AECG Awards night</b>	Delivered in partnership with local AECG saw over 350 Indigenous primary and high school students, families, community members and school staff in attendance. 67 Indigenous

	students from local primary and high schools received awards, celebrating their success.
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**Transition**

Western’s Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education provides a suite of pre-emptive strategies focused on identified transition and tension points for students when they are most likely to require additional support. The team work collaboratively with the Future Student Engagement Team to engage with prospective Indigenous students, particularly students in senior high school, for example prospective Indigenous students become familiar with facilities and meet staff during their on-campus events.

### 3. Progression (outcomes)

**Western Sydney University’s Embedded ISSP Strategies, Activities and Programs to Support Indigenous Students**

Badanami - Centre for Indigenous Education’s approach focuses on personalised support for each Indigenous student. Students are grouped into cohorts and paired with a dedicated Badanami staff member who offers continuous guidance and advice, ensuring they receive the assistance they need to navigate their academic journey. This personalised support takes place through various channels, including face-to-face meetings, phone calls, email, and text, enabling ongoing communication and relationship-building. This personalised approach not only helps students within their coursework but also plays a crucial role in improving retention rates. By fostering strong, supportive relationships with staff and providing timely and relevant guidance, Badanami ensures that students are equipped with the tools and support they need to stay engaged and motivated. In 2024, Badanami facilitated over 6,500 individual engagements, including 1,625 face-to-face interactions, 2,684 emails, 1,010 phone calls, and 1,177 text messages. This high level of engagement helps build a sense of accountability, strengthens students’ connections to their education, and significantly contributes to their academic persistence and success.

Badanami staff are committed to supporting and empowering Indigenous students at Western by providing a range of tailored programs, services, and facilities that foster a strong sense of community, connection, and belonging. By creating a culturally safe environment, Badanami enables students to build on their unique strengths and thrive in their academic pursuits, helping them achieve success throughout their studies. All twelve Schools across Western collaborate with Badanami to provide individualised support for Indigenous Students within their cohorts. Outlined below are the previously reported on School-based support structures that have been detailed in former ISSP reports and are therefore only noted in summary below.

Western Sydney University continues to demonstrate its commitment to supporting students in successfully completing their units. Most, though not all, Schools have dedicated professional staff in their Schools to provide tailored assistance to students, ensuring students receive individualised support throughout their studies. For example, as previously reported, the **School of Social Science’s (SoSS)** Indigenous Education team work directly with Indigenous students, to provide bespoke academic, career and pastoral support. In 2024, this included over 1,100 contacts made to Indigenous students throughout each semester to ensure that students are well supported to succeed in their units of study. The team monitor student progression to identify and provide early interventions as required to ensure Indigenous student retention and success. The **School of Law (SoL)**, as previously report on, has a dedicated professional staff member who offers support through monthly welfare check-ins via calls and emails, and referrals to relevant staff or departments when help is needed. The SoL provides Indigenous students with textbooks for their subjects in Law, in 2024, 49 students were provided with their textbooks at a cost of \$15,345. The **School of Medicine (SoM)** has a peer

mentoring scheme and students have access to Indigenous Professors and staff throughout their studies, for assistance. **The School of Nursing and Midwifery (SoNM)** has their dedicated Indigenous Liaison Academic who continues to provide one-on-one support for Indigenous students, and also ensures that learning content across the School is culturally appropriate. **The School of Education (SoE)** has an Indigenous Student Success Officer (ISSO) to provide targeted cultural and pastoral support to Indigenous students, including working closely with the School's academic staff, acting as a point of referral for Indigenous students identified as 'at-risk'. As previously reported in the **School of Engineering, Design and the Built Environment (SoEDBE)** delivers the [ASPIRE Program](#) is a unique initiative which supports Indigenous undergraduate students. In 2024, APSIRE extended its support to the Indigenous students within the **School of Data, Computer and Mathematical Sciences (SoDMS)**. The SoCDMS also continued with providing mentoring and support through the Badanami team, to ensure guidance was provided to Indigenous students within their cohort. The **School of Business (SoBus)** employs an Indigenous Liaison Coordinator who provides cultural support, guidance and promotion, along with one-on-one support.

### **Western Sydney University's New Strategies, Activities and Programs Implemented in 2024 to Support Indigenous Students to Complete Units**

In 2024, Badanami launched the **Deadly Chat** platform to enhance engagement opportunities for Indigenous students by providing a flexible and accessible way to connect with staff. This innovative tool allows students to schedule personalised one-on-one video chats with Badanami team members at their convenience, with an instant chat feature also available for quick inquiries. The **Deadly Chat** platform has facilitated 75 interactions in 2024, demonstrating steady growth in student engagement and interaction. By offering direct, real-time support, this platform helps students navigate academic challenges, access culturally responsive assistance, and stay connected with the university community. By reducing barriers to seeking help such as time constraints, location, and hesitation in reaching out, **Deadly Chat** plays a crucial role in Indigenous student retention. It empowers students to stay on track with their studies, fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring they receive timely guidance to successfully complete their units. As its usage continues to grow, it is set to become a key tool in strengthening Indigenous student success at Western Sydney University.

There were multiple School based activities, including the following:

1. The SoHS completed an Indigenous module for Allied Health Clinical Educators aimed at supporting clinical educators in supervising Indigenous students during clinical placements.
2. The SoMN appointed a new Indigenous academic to take on the Indigenous Liaison role with a dedicated workload to support students. Participation of Indigenous nursing students at Campbelltown and Parramatta campuses have increased participation in Badanami support. In collaboration with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (DVC&VP) Indigenous Leadership, the School supported two Indigenous students attended the 2024 Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) conference in Perth (alongside two staff).

### **Measurements for Outcomes of the Strategies, Activities and Programs**

Western Sydney University measures the impact of Badanami's initiatives on Indigenous student progression and retention in alignment with the Western Indigenous Strategy 2020–2025. This strategy sets key targets for Indigenous student enrolment, retention, and success, which Badanami actively supports through personalised academic assistance, tutoring, and engagement programs. In 2024, Badanami recorded over 6,500 student interactions, demonstrating strong student engagement. The effectiveness of initiatives such as *Tutoring for Success*, *Deadly Chat*, and the *Indigenous Student Leadership Retreat* is tracked through retention and progression rates, unit completion, and GPA trends, ensuring measurable progress against the strategy's objectives. The outcomes in 2024 highlight Badanami's role in strengthening Indigenous student success. *Tutoring for*

*Success* has improved student skill development and unit completion rates, while the *Deadly Chat* platform has increased accessibility by reducing barriers to seeking help. Additionally, the inaugural *Indigenous Student Leadership Retreat* provided students with leadership training and cultural connection opportunities, equipping them with skills to support their academic and professional journeys.

The Schools also conduct monitoring and evaluation, as evidenced by the following examples:

1. The SoBus assesses the performance and progression of its students annually, which includes an explicit assessment of Indigenous student performance. In 2024 the graduating cohort from the School of Business's Indigenous students had an average GPA of 5.23 compared to the GPA of 4.76 of their non-Indigenous peers, which clearly highlights the success of the initiatives and strategies being utilised.
2. Within the SoCDMS, student engagement and performance are tracked through vUWS analytics and assessment outcomes.
3. The SoEd used several techniques to assess the overall effectiveness of its support strategies for Indigenous students, including analysing data sets such as Subject Completions, Requests for Extensions and Disruption to Studies applications and collecting qualitative feedback from students.
4. The SoEDBE offers the ASPIRE Program, which measures its effectiveness through several key indicators assessing both academic success and career progression for Indigenous students. These indicators include tracking student achievements in coursework, internships, and post-graduation employment. The program has successfully increased Indigenous student representation within the school from 0.5% to 2%, with a target of 3% by the end of 2025.
5. The SoHS along with the SoMed use data on retention and progression rates to measure the impact of their strategies.
6. The School of Law judges the effectiveness of its strategies from qualitative evidence received directly from student feedback, and by the completion rates of Indigenous students. The number of students has increased each year from 2022-2024 with the number of students dropping out, lapsing or discontinuing also decreasing. The School of Law had three students recognised for their academic accomplishments at the University's inaugural NAIDOC week awards ceremony. The awards won by the Indigenous students were 2024 Indigenous Student Post Graduate Course Work Excellence Award, 2024 Indigenous Student Stage Two Academic Excellence Award and 2024 Outstanding Indigenous Student Award.
7. The School of Midwifery and Nursing had 54 continuing Indigenous students in Autumn 2024, 50 remained after census (92.6% retained after census).

### **Tutoring for Success**

In 2024, Badanami continued to facilitate the *Tutoring for Success Program (TFS)*. This program pairs students with qualified tutors for one-on-one support, helping them build essential academic skills and capabilities that are crucial for success in their coursework and units. Tutors assist students in areas such as mastering course content, improving academic writing, enhancing study techniques, and developing research skills. By offering tailored support in these critical areas, *Tutoring for Success* empowers students to thrive in their studies, boosting their confidence and performance.

This individualised tutoring not only strengthens their understanding of course material but also provides them with the academic tools they need to navigate complex assignments and assessments. As a result, this program plays a significant role in improving retention rates, as it helps students stay on track, overcome academic challenges, and remain engaged with Badanami ensuring they remain connected and supported throughout their university journey. Delivered within a culturally safe and

supportive environment, TFS fosters a strong sense of belonging, motivating Indigenous students to stay engaged and persist in their studies.

Student feedback highlights the positive impact of these initiatives, with many expressing increased confidence, encouragement, and academic growth. Comments such as *“My tutor is really patient, and after each session, I feel more confident”* and *“It was a very productive session, and I feel like we made a good start on my upcoming assessment”* demonstrate the effectiveness of tutoring in helping students manage their workloads and develop strong academic foundations. Others noted the flexibility and practical support provided, stating, *“Great flexibility and help with assignments”* and *“My tutor was able to help me break down my assignment so I could understand it clearly and get it started.”*

**Table 2 Tutorial assistance provided in 2024**

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted <sup>6</sup>	Total number of tutorial sessions attended <sup>7</sup>	Total hours of assistance <sup>8</sup>	Expenditure <sup>9</sup> (\$)
Enabling	0	0	0	\$0
Undergraduate	150	1,557	3,675hrs	\$239,874.17
Post-graduate	7	63	69hrs	\$4,641.08
Other	0	0	0	\$0
<b>Total</b>	157	1,620	3,744	<b>\$244,515.25</b>

### Cultural Competency Initiatives at Western Sydney University

In 2024, the University’s *Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE Ltd)* Indigenous Cygnet published a research project titled [‘\*Gathering Insights and Embedding Improvements for Indigenous Staff\*’](#). This research project demonstrated the University’s commitment to embedding Indigenous perspectives within its institutional framework. The impact of this work is reflected in the University’s ability to drive meaningful change across the higher education sector. Notably, SAGE invited Western Sydney Universities Indigenous Cygnet research team to present their findings to a national network of 41 institutions, reinforcing the influence and effectiveness of the University’s Indigenous-led approach. By integrating Indigenous cultural competency into leadership development, research, and institutional policies, Western Sydney University is fostering a more inclusive and informed academic environment where staff can engage meaningfully with Indigenous knowledge systems and communities.

The impact of these initiatives is measured through:

- **Engagement and participation rates** in Indigenous-led networking opportunities.
- **Staff feedback** gathered through research projects and institutional surveys.
- **Sector-wide recognition and influence**, demonstrated by invitations to present research findings and best practices to other universities and research institutions.

This research will continue to influence Western Sydney Universities planning and commitment to increasing Indigenous cultural competency across the institution.

Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education invests in the cultural competency of students through initiatives that promote cultural awareness, leadership, and connection to Indigenous heritage. The Centre hosts multiple social gathering throughout the year on our multi-campus sites. Programs such as the Indigenous National Student Games, provide valuable opportunities for students to engage with their culture while developing leadership skills. The Indigenous Nationals foster cultural pride, connection and unity through sport, bringing students together to celebrate their identity in a

supportive and competitive environment. This initiative has had a significant impact on students, with many reflecting on how these experiences have deepened their cultural understanding and strengthened their confidence as leaders. The success of this programs is measured through student engagement, feedback, and the establishment of ongoing initiatives. Through these experiences, students gain valuable skills, build strong networks, and develop a greater sense of identity, ensuring they are empowered to succeed within and beyond the university.

Western invests in building the leadership capacity of our Indigenous staff through an annual Indigenous leadership forum, which helps staff to ensure that students benefit from culturally enriched learning environments.

Western Sydney University is dedicated to embedding cultural competency across the institution by providing staff with meaningful opportunities to engage with Indigenous spaces, collaborate with Indigenous colleagues, and participate in key initiatives and events. Below are a range of examples of the work being undertaken at Western through Schools. The university hosts regular Indigenous events such as the Indigenous Professoriate lecture, Yarramundi lecture and NAIDOC week events.

There are a range different way in which Western Sydney University invests in cultural competency for both students and staff at School level. Some Schools are addressing staff cultural competency through dedicated disciplinary activities. For instance, the School of Humanities and Communication Arts, which in 2024 provided regular, culturally led, professional training in cultural protocols for non-Indigenous staff. The School of Business invested in cultural competency through facilitating a knowledge-sharing and painting workshop with a Darkinjung Elder. Indigenous participants reported on how engaging the event was, and similarly non-Indigenous participants valued the opportunity to develop cultural knowledge and understanding. The School of Education ensures that all recent and relevant research is made available to staff through regular circulation of resources by the Dean. Staff (34) from the School of Nursing and Midwifery undertook Cultural Responsiveness training via Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA). In 2024, the School of Psychology held a day long mandatory teaching staff development session titled Curriculum Conversations: Decolonising the Curriculum, delivered by a visiting Indigenous scholar.

The university also has a very active program of Indigenising curriculum. We have a Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Education who provides advice to Schools on Indigenous Learning and Teaching, teaches in the university Foundations of Teaching and Learning program and who monitors progress through university level courses accreditation committee. In addition, the university hosts two regular teaching and learning annual events and Indigenous curriculum is a routine part of those events, showcasing Indigenous curriculum innovation from across the university. The university also has a suite of Indigenous Learning and Teaching [awards](#), which provide reward and recognition of curriculum work in this area. Some schools have local Indigenous Learning and Teaching Awards. This year one Indigenous staff member was supported by the university to achieve an [Advance HE Fellowship](#), a globally recognised award recognising professionalism in Learning and Teaching.

All Schools are working towards integrated Indigenous curriculum using a curriculum pedagogical framework. Below are four selected examples of a variety of approaches to current work.

1. The School of Health Sciences Indigenous Strategy Committee, chaired by an Indigenous academic, noted the need for continued focus on Indigenous education update and enhanced staff cultural competency. In the Bachelor of Podiatric Medicine (BPM) Program, two First Nations placement locations were established and are now operational. Every 4th year student in the BPM attends placement at Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation Outreach Service. Evaluation of podiatry students' clinical competencies using a First Nations clinical assessment

tool. There have now been increased levels of competencies in using the tool by clinical educators and students in podiatry placement subjects

2. In 2024, the School of Social Sciences Core Community of Practice group continued their work in mapping progress on embedding the Indigenous Graduate Attribute in core Social Sciences subjects (Bachelor programs). The team mapped the developments including Indigenous content, assessments and assessable materials to scaffold and build curriculum to meet level 1 (Preparation and Introduction), Level 2 (Developing) and Level 3 (Assuring) program learning outcomes. All Bachelor programs in the School of Social Sciences are now compliant with meeting the foundation of the Indigenous Graduate Attribute. The content developed within these subjects feed into all disciplines, with relevant Indigenous content throughout each stage of every Bachelor level degree program. This strategy better engages Indigenous students, by having learning materials, assessments and content delivered that takes on Indigenous contexts and standpoints – bringing inclusion and diversity to School of Social Sciences teaching spaces. It also establishes deeper levels of understanding for the whole Schools student cohort to gain deeper understandings of Indigenous worldviews in Australia and beyond.
3. The School of Law recognises that decolonising the curriculum is an ongoing project, and that in the study of law it is particularly critical to challenges the assumptions on which the entire legal architecture of Australia is built. The School ensures that Indigenous perspectives and knowledges are embedded and interwoven throughout all our law programs. The Director of Academic Programs and Deputy Dean provide continual advice and input to staff on incorporating appropriate materials, including Indigenous scholarship, into course reading lists, for example. In 2024 an academic staff member received a WSU Indigenous Focused Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning for Indigenising the Contracts curriculum.
4. The School of Health Sciences Occupational Therapy (OT) program Indigenises curriculum, aligned with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework and professional competencies standards. All OT students complete external training in cultural awareness and communication as well as learning activities in individual subjects that increase their knowledge, skills and experiences working with Indigenous clients. The School of Health Sciences included a session on 'Gathering Insight and Embedding Workplace Improvements for Indigenous Staff at Western Sydney University' at the 2024 November School Forum. The School also established an Indigenous Learning and Teaching Service Awards for community partners, and for academic staff who integrate respectful, responsive, and culturally safe activities and initiatives into teaching, that build the cultural competence of academic staff and students.

#### **Other Initiatives that Support Student Retention and Progression in Units**

In 2024, the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education facilitated a transformative learning exchange in Taiwan through the *Indigenous Taiwan New Colombo Plan Cultural Program*, an initiative that does not rely on ISSP funding. This experience provided Indigenous students from Western Sydney University with an opportunity to engage with Indigenous Taiwanese communities, deepening their understanding of cultural identity and global Indigenous resilience. Through academic presentations and firsthand experiences, students explored the ongoing impacts of colonisation, Indigenous language revitalisation efforts, and community-led initiatives that reclaim cultural practices. These experiences fostered meaningful connections and strengthened students' appreciation for their own cultural heritage.

Students described the exchange as life-changing, highlighting the deep bonds formed with both their peers and Indigenous Taiwanese communities. Many reflected on how the experience broadened their perspectives, providing a renewed sense of cultural pride and motivation to advocate for Indigenous self-determination. Others spoke about how the exchange filled gaps in their leadership skills and helped them grow personally and professionally. By participating in cultural exchanges like this, Indigenous students are empowered to strengthen their identities, build confidence, and develop valuable leadership skills, reinforcing Western Sydney University's commitment to Indigenous student success beyond traditional academic support.

We aim to ensure that our Badanami Centres are culturally vibrant places that create spaces where Indigenous students can study and seek assistance where required. We also recognise the value of our Centres being places where students can socialise with other Indigenous students, forging strong bonds that amplify sense of belonging and self-belief. To that end, in 2024 we have sought to expand the value of the centres by providing basic foodstuffs, hygiene products and coffee machines in some centres. We have also refurbished lounges in some centres.

## 4. Completions (outcomes)

### **Western Sydney University's Embedded ISSP Strategies, Activities and Programs to Improve Award Course Completions of Indigenous Students**

Outlined below are the previously reported on strategies, activities and programs that have been detailed in former ISSP reports and are therefore only noted in summary below.

Within the SoCDMS, the embedded mentoring program provides ongoing support and career guidance for improve completions, and the School provides support throughout the program and post-studies. The SoEd provides workshops, advice, and tutorials for literacy and numeracy to improve LANTITE success and course completion. The SoEDBE's ASPIRE program alumni provide talks and participate in workshops, acting as role models for other students and increasing program viability and success. The SoHS has their Indigenous Student Network, and events led by Indigenous staff, mentoring and tutoring support aimed at creating a culturally safe environment to build a sense of community. The SoMed offers weekly check-ins with their Indigenous Professor for penultimate and final-year students on placement. The SoMN employs an Indigenous Liaison Officer to provide support and referrals to support students to complete their studies. The SoP offers multiple scholarships to improve course completion, including the Dean's Indigenous Master of Professional Psychology Scholarship and Indigenous Australians Psychology Undergraduate Scholarships. The SoSS has multiple roles focused on retention and completion, including Indigenous Education Officer and Associate Dean (Indigenous Education). The SoSS also hosts regular discussions and strategies for retention, and follow-up support for at-risk students.

### **New Strategies the University Implemented in 2024 to Support Students to Complete Qualifications**

In 2024, the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education introduced the inaugural **Indigenous Student Leadership Retreat**. This retreat offered a two-day immersive experience focused on leadership development and cultural connection. Participants engaged in leadership workshops, exploring leadership styles, Indigenous leadership, and mentoring, equipping them with valuable skills for both personal and professional growth. Cultural workshops provided a space for students to deepen their connection to heritage, share knowledge, and strengthen their sense of identity in a supportive and empowering environment. Participants in the leadership retreat found the program empowering, helping them develop skills they could apply in their careers and communities. The retreat provided a space for students to share knowledge, learn from one another, and form lasting connections. Students described the experience as transformative, giving them a renewed sense of purpose and motivation to embrace leadership roles. Following the success of the inaugural retreat, the program

will continue in 2025, further enhancing leadership opportunities for Indigenous students and reinforcing cultural connection as a key pillar of student success at Western Sydney University.

In 2024 Western hosted several events to foster current students' sense of belonging, and to contribute to student engagement and retention, through connection to study success. We held what will become an annual NAIDOC Gala Dinner to coordinate an Indigenous student and staff awards evening with a national celebration. Awards (funded through corporate sponsorship) included merit awards for students and excellence awards for staff and students. Western also continued several student focused engagement activities including our annual Indigenous staff versus students sporting events (soccer and basketball), which are growing to be popular community engagement activities. These events also create an opportunity for Indigenous students to meet and get to know Indigenous staff, providing a unique occasion for role-modelling.

A new development in 2024, for the SoEd, was the employment of a University Partnership Lead position in the School. This position, funded by the NSW Department of Education (DoE), has employed to support students to make connections with the Department and assist in facilitating a pathway to employment with the Department. This position has enabled a direct connection between the Department and Indigenous students from the commencement of their studies.

The SoEDBE has implemented several ISSP-aligned strategies and initiatives through the ASPIRE Program to improve award course completions for Indigenous students. These include paid internships with 26 industry partners from the second semester of their degree until graduation, ensuring financial stability, practical industry exposure, and professional networking opportunities. Increased graduation rates are also noted, with ASPIRE Program alumni securing roles in top firms such as Arcadis, Multiplex, and WSP.

Within the SoP, the Associate Dean (Indigenous and Community Engagement) contacted all Indigenous students in Psychology programs who were on leave or deferred study sequence to check in and offered specialised support. The School also improved pathways and access for Indigenous students to postgraduate programs.

The School of Law has focused on providing greater opportunities for mentoring, internships, networking, and career pathways, specifically designed for Indigenous students. Some of the opportunities include, NSW Bar Association First Nations Mentoring Program, New South Wales Bar Association First Nations Clerkship Program, Gilbert + Tobin 2024 First Nations Legal Networking Evening. The School of Law also informs and assists students with applications for casual work opportunities with organisations such as the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS), Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP). These strategies collectively enhance both the academic success and career opportunities for Indigenous students, thereby improving retention.

## **5. Regional and remote students**

The Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education ensures that all Indigenous students, including those from regional and remote areas, have equitable access to academic and cultural support. Students benefit from personalised assistance through initiatives like *Tutoring for Success*, ongoing staff outreach, and cultural engagement programs. While all Indigenous students have access to these services, regional and remote students particularly benefit from *Deadly Chat*, a real-time online support platform designed to remove geographical barriers. This initiative allows students to seek academic guidance, connect with support staff, and engage in cultural discussions without needing to

be on campus, ensuring they feel just as connected and supported as their peers in metropolitan areas.

To further strengthen connections with students who may feel isolated due to distance, Badanami also sends care packages throughout the year containing university-branded merchandise and other resources, reinforcing their connection to Western Sydney University. Students have shared that receiving these packages makes them feel valued and supported, helping to maintain their motivation and sense of identity within the university community. These combined efforts contribute to stronger engagement, retention, and success for Indigenous students, regardless of their location.

**Table 4 ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students<sup>10</sup>**

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2023 Payments	8000	4			8,125	4	16,125	8
B. 2024 Offers <sup>11</sup>	18000	9					18,000	9
C. Percentage <sup>12</sup> (C=B/A*100)								
<b>2024 Payments</b>	18,000	9 7 inner regional 2 outer regional					18,000	9 7 inner regional 2 outer regional

## 6. Eligibility criteria

### 6.1 Indigenous Education Strategy

Western Sydney University continues to make significant strides in implementing our Indigenous education strategy, namely the [2020-2025 Indigenous Strategy](#) and the [2023-2032 Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy](#), each highlighting the University's continued commitment to Indigenous education.

In 2024, the University had 781 Indigenous students accounting for 2.15% of all domestic students, which shows an increase since the implementation of the 2020-2025 Indigenous Strategy. In 2024, 351 Indigenous students commenced, accounting for 1.78% of commencing students, another increase since the implementation of the 2020-2025 Indigenous Strategy.

Both the *2020-2025 Indigenous Strategy* and *2023-2032 Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy* promotes the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in curriculum and teaching practices through the integration of Indigenous perspectives. This is perhaps best exemplified in the implementation of individualised strategy having been written and incorporated in each of the University's 12 schools and in the University library, which are listed below:

- [School of Business Indigenous Strategy](#)

- [School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Education Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Health Sciences Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Humanities and Communication Arts Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Law Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Medicine Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Nursing and Midwifery Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Psychology Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Science Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [School of Social Sciences Indigenous Strategy](#)
- [Western Sydney University Library Indigenous Strategy](#)

These strategies reinforce Western Sydney University as a leader in Indigenous education and ongoing commitment to the incorporation of Indigenous cultures and knowledge in teaching and curricula as outlined in this report. An Indigenous Student Retention Strategy was developed and approved in 2024. In 2025, we will be consulting, preparing and finalising our *2026-2030 Indigenous Strategy*.

## 6.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

Western Sydney University has established both a long term ([Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy 2023-2032](#)) and short term ([Indigenous Strategy 2020-2025](#)) strategy which influences and highlights the strategic direction and for the institution when regarding Indigenous matters. Both strategies recognise the importance of creating employment opportunities for the Indigenous communities of Australia to gain experience at a large, diverse organisation and creating initiatives for existing staff. The Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy 2023-2033 commits to delivering professional pathways for new and existing staff to enable Indigenous staff to build meaningful careers and achieve their goals. In conjunction with this, Indigenous Strategy Objective 2 focuses on Indigenous Employment with a commitment to five strategic actions. The strategic sections include:

1. Develop a set of strategies to ensure that the number of Indigenous staff reflects population parity.
2. Encourage all Schools to have at least one professoriate-level Indigenous position.
3. Ensure professional development opportunities, mentorship and support for Indigenous staff.
4. Establish a suite of Early Career positions across the University with clear, supported and reliable longer-term career pathways.
5. Develop a successful Indigenous traineeship program for employment within the University.

Now, nearing the end of the 2020-2025 Indigenous Strategy, Western Sydney University has achieved the following:

- In 2022, The Ignite Indigenous Traineeship program was established by the Division of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership (DDVCIL) at Western Sydney University, to provide trainees with meaningful opportunities for professional growth, formal Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications, and paid experience within a supportive and nurturing environment. Designed to foster skill development and career progression, the program enables participants to navigate and thrive within the university's large and complex

institutional setting. As outlined in Table 1, the program has seen sixteen students complete the traineeship program, with eight more commencing in 2025.

**Table 1 - Ignite Indigenous Traineeship Program Year-on-Year Data**

	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Number of Positions</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Number of Completions</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>TBC</b>
<b>Trainees secured employment at WSU</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>TBC</b>
- Ongoing	1		2	TBC
- Fixed Term	6		2	TBC
- Casual	1	1		TBC
<b>Trainees considering/ undertaking higher education studies</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>TBC</b>

- In 2023 Western Sydney University as a part of the existing academic decasualisation program allocated a suite of Indigenous positions to the scheme. This initiative has provided entry level opportunities to **seven** Indigenous staff in the academic space, since 2023, with **four** more positions on offer in 2025.
- The DDVCIL launched an Indigenous Professional Staff Mentoring program in conjunction with Western Sydney Universities Organisational Development Team. The program is designed to support the career aspirations of Indigenous staff and establishes strong foundations for leadership within the Indigenous space. In 2024, the program continued to support Indigenous staff in their professional growth, with another successful completion was recorded.
- In 2024, the Indigenous Staff Wellbeing Days continued as a vital initiative led by the DDVCIL, with ongoing support from Western Sydney University's Equity Safety and Wellbeing Team. These sessions, held quarterly across various campuses, remain dedicated to fostering a culturally safe space for Indigenous staff to connect, reflect, and prioritise their wellbeing.
- The annual Indigenous Staff Conference continued in 2024 as a key initiative, bringing together Indigenous Academic and Professional staff to network, collaborate, and engage in meaningful discussions. With the theme *Strength in Unity: Building an Empowered and Enriched Community*, this year's conference focused on fostering collective strength, knowledge-sharing, and strategic collaboration.
- There are 79 ongoing and fixed-term staff who have formally identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. In comparison, the number of identified staff for the same period last year was 68. The most significant year-on-year growth is observed among academic staff, with a 53% increase. Overall, Indigenous staff make up 2.9% of the University's ongoing and fixed-term workforce.

### 6.3. Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Professor Michelle Trudgett, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Indigenous Leadership (DVCIL) chairs the Western Sydney University Indigenous Governance Mechanism (IGM). Professor Trudgett is a member of the WSU Senior Executive Team. There are four other senior Indigenous members serving on the IGM: the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Education, the Director of Indigenous Research, the Director of Indigenous Futures, and the Director of Badanami Centre of Indigenous Education. The Indigenous members of the committee have experience with university budget processes, with the ISSP Guidelines and work across key areas of Indigenous education in the university. The IGM has Terms of Reference, which comply with National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) guidelines, and which outline the membership, and committee remit.

The IGM met four times in 2024. As well as the five Indigenous IGM members, each meeting also included members who are senior staff from the Division of Finance and Resources to ensure ISSP funds were allocated in accordance with the NIAA ISSP Handbook (issued May 2020). The IGM has responsibility and authority to advise, recommend and monitor use of ISSP grant funding. The committee determines and approves funding allocations and monitors the budget regularly to ensure appropriate and timely expenditure of funds. Consistent with university practice, the DVCIL receives monthly budget updates. There were no unexpected issues in 2024, although regular monitoring of the budget indicated an underspend in the Tutoring for Success Program, which enabled the committee to plan for alternative expenditure on a student leadership program.

#### **Broader Indigenous Leadership Engagements at Western**

Western is deeply committed to ensuring Indigenous People are involved in decision making processes across the University. This is ensured through a variety of methods, which include:

- An Indigenous representation on the Board of Trustees, Indigenous representative term on the Board of Trustees commenced in early 2022.
- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership is a member of the Senior Executive Team.
- An Elders Advisory Committee meets quarterly. Members are briefed on key Indigenous activity across the University and provide cultural advice and approval as required. Four meetings were held in 2024.
- Senior Indigenous staff serve on university level research, teaching and learning committees, gender equity and employment committees.
  - There are now fourteen school, institute and service provider produced Indigenous Strategies consistent with the University's *Indigenous Strategy 2020-2025*. These local strategies are committed to Indigenous leadership and can be found [here](#). The most recent Indigenous Strategy was developed by the university's library.
  - There is an Indigenous Professoriate Group consisting of up to seven senior Indigenous academics in 2024, which advises the DVCIL. The group meets regularly and hosted two Professoriate Lecturers across the University in 2024, to educate and inspire students and staff.
  - The School of Medicine and the School of Social Sciences have an Associate Dean Indigenous Education located within their Executive structure.
  - There are five Indigenous staff members and one Indigenous student who are members of the Academic Senate. Notably, the Executive Committee for Academic Senate comprises of eight senior staff members – three of whom are Indigenous.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership, Professor Michelle Trudgett held a number of national sector leadership roles in 2024 including Chair of the Universities Australia Indigenous Deputy/Pro Vice-Chancellor Committee and member of the inaugural Australian Research Council Indigenous Forum. Other Indigenous senior staff also hold a range of sector wide leadership positions.

### **6.3.1. Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism**

I am confident that the activities reported in this document are aligned with ISSP Guidelines and consistent with our University-wide approach to Indigenous Australians. We continued to collaborate with our partners internally and externally to provide current and prospective Indigenous students with the resources needed to excel during their time studying with us. Our leadership and engagement programs will continue to expand to support our students. I look forward to continuing to shape and implement the final stages of our WSU 2020-2025 Indigenous Strategy and our 2023-2032 Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy that will further empower Western Sydney University to become the University of choice for Indigenous Australians.

## Additional information for completing the template

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<sup>1</sup> This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2024. 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 2024 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

<sup>4</sup> Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

<sup>5</sup> Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

<sup>6</sup>Total number of unique students supported by tutorial assistance (if students have attended multiple tutorial sessions, still count them as 1 student).

<sup>7</sup> 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).

<sup>8</sup> Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).

<sup>9</sup> Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.

<sup>10</sup> Only record amounts which required payment during the 2024 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.

<sup>11</sup> Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2024 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2024 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2023 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships).

<sup>12</sup> This data confirms the university's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.