The Welcoming Universities Standard

Welcoming Universities

Version 2.1 October 2026

Peter John Maniapig / Unsplash

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Welcoming Universities

Welcoming Universities acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional custodians and ancestors of this country, and the continuation of their cultural, spiritual and ceremonial practices.

We respectfully acknowledge the past and present Traditional Owners of the land, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and respect their culture and identity, which has been a continuum with the land and sea for generations.

We have a role to play in achieving a just Australia in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights as First Peoples are recognised and respected.

Welcoming Universities also seeks to engage local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as leaders in welcoming activities.

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From welcoming... to belonging 2

First Nations recognition 3

Diversity on (and off) campus 4

The Standard 6

Scope 6

Sustainable Development Goals 9

Terms and definitions 10

Adopting the Standard and formal Accreditation 12

Reading the Standard 15

1.0 Leadership 16

2.0 Social and cultural inclusion 18

3.0 Teaching, learning, and research 20

4.0 Places and spaces 24

Assessment and Accreditation 27

Compliance and good practice 29

Bibliography 30

Endnotes 31

From welcoming... to belonging

As one of the world's most ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse nations, Australian universities should be leaders in welcoming and including students, staff, and communities of all backgrounds – established residents, recently arrived migrants, including international students, refugees, and people seeking asylum.

The message of 'welcome' needs to be supported and advanced through evidence, data, partnership, knowledge sharing, and benchmarking. More than an organisational value or a glossy campaign, welcoming, inclusion, and belonging should be a framework for building educational attainment, social and economic participation, and success.

Many universities have strong policies around equity, diversity, and inclusion, but these policies must be intersectional and embedded across the university to be effective. Rather than expecting diverse cohorts to adapt to the university environment, Welcoming Universities must adapt as institutions to provide for diverse cohorts[1].

Establishing belonging is more complex than equity, inclusion and diversity, and has been described as "an ongoing process of becoming that requires continual institutional welcome, affirmation, and support"[2].

A strong sense of belonging during university has been associated with improved student wellbeing, engagement, persistence, retention and academic success, making it a critical outcome alongside access, participation and completion[3].

Belonging asks, "Does everyone on campus feel valued, connected and able to be their authentic self?"[4].

Does everyone on campus feel valued, connected and able to be their authentic self?

First Nations recognition

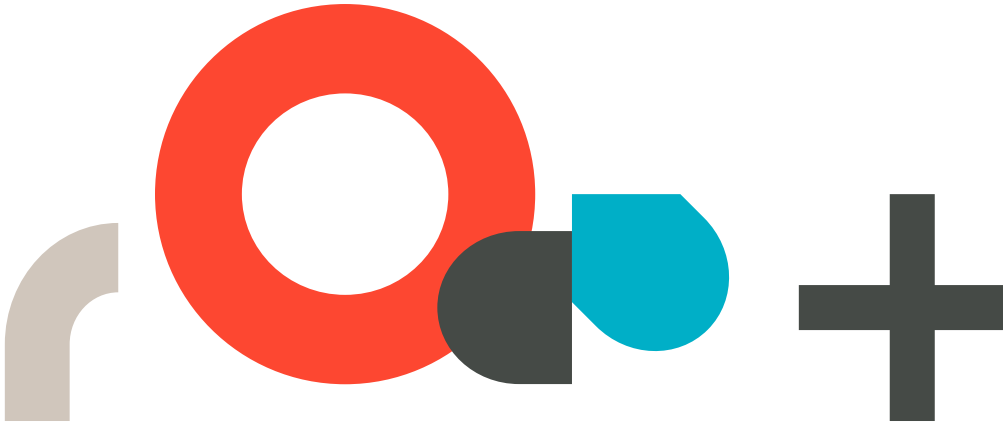
Welcoming Universities acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are the First Peoples and Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which Australia's universities rest. Members collectively acknowledge that Aboriginal sovereignty of the land was never ceded.

Welcoming Universities acknowledge that higher education in Australia began as a colonial construct, with little accessibility for First Nations people.

Welcoming Universities are committed to 'truth telling' about Australia's history, Indigenous-settler relations, the ongoing impacts of colonisation, addressing barriers to Indigenous participation and supporting the empowerment and self-determination of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Welcoming Universities as an initiative recognises a distinction between the idea of offering a Welcome and being welcoming. The use of the term 'welcoming' is a deliberate choice. It recognises that as a nation, it is the role of all community members to be welcoming and to advance communities where everyone can participate and thrive in social, cultural, economic, and civic life.

This is distinct from settler populations offering a 'Welcome' to this place in a country where First Nations peoples still strive for recognition and treaty.



Diversity on (and off) campus

Australian university campuses are hubs of diversity and culture.

The Welcoming Universities initiative is most specifically focused on cultural diversity within universities, but recognises that diversity extends beyond culture, and an intersectional approach to this work is essential. Growing university campuses that support and champion different ways of thinking, learning and viewing the world is a critical asset in this interconnected global world.

Most students in Australian universities believe that being in gender and culturally diverse classrooms is the most significant and favourable influence on their learning experiences[5]. Engagement with diverse peers and educators gives students the confidence to engage with the broader community, improves their learning potential, builds cross-cultural knowledge and understanding and enhances global ideas and exchange.[6]

Australian universities are diverse and reflect this intersectionality. In 2024, females continued to outnumber males among all enrolled students at Australian universities[7]. There were more than 6,000 students nationwide who identified as non-binary, intersex, or other gender identities[8]. 12.4% of domestic students identified as having a disability, 15.4% were from low socioeconomic backgrounds, 18% lived in regional or remote communities, 2.3% identified as First Nations, 16% were women studying in non-traditional fields of education, and 3.3% of domestic students were from a non-English speaking background[9].

Many students experience multiple forms of disadvantage simultaneously. In 2024, more than 8,400 First Nations students were also from low socioeconomic backgrounds, over 10,000 First Nations students lived in regional or remote communities, and more than 22,000 students were both low SES and living with disability[10]. These findings demonstrate the importance of recognising intersectionality when developing inclusive policies, support services and engagement strategies.

In 1990, the Australian Government's A Fair Chance for All report established a national framework for equity in higher education with the aim of ensuring that the benefits of higher education were accessible to all Australians.

The framework identified six groups that were underrepresented in higher education and continue to underpin national equity policy, data collection and reporting: students from non-English speaking backgrounds, students with disability, women in non-traditional fields of study, First Nations students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and students from regional and remote communities[11].

While these groups remain central to Australia's higher education equity framework, there is growing recognition that existing equity measures do not always capture the full diversity of students' experiences and circumstances.

Social, cultural and structural factors that influence access, participation, belonging, success and completion in higher education affect a broad range of students, including those who are the first in their family to attend university, students from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds, carers, mature-age students, LGBTQIA+ students, veterans, and others who may encounter barriers to participation, inclusion and success. Many students identify with more than one equity group or experience multiple forms of disadvantage simultaneously[12].

Around 35% of all students enrolled in Australian higher education institutions in 2024 were overseas students[13]. International students are excluded from the Australian Government's recognised equity groups in higher education, even though many of these students may identify with various equity categories.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that uses *"the cultural characteristics and experiences as conduits for teaching equity groups more effectively"* [14].

It is an area of research and work with international currency and growing attention in Australia. A culturally responsive pedagogy views students' identities and backgrounds as assets for learning[15].

Research into the experiences of culturally diverse students (international, migrant and forcibly displaced students) transitioning in, through and out of university identifies that the support needs of these cohorts are currently not being met [16].

In a rapidly changing world diversity within Australian universities equips students with a global mindset, and opportunities for learning interculturally, and the chance to build international connections. However, there is work for universities to do in making their institutions welcoming for diverse students, staff and communities, and places where all can belong.

Scope

The Welcoming Universities Standard is a central element of the Welcoming Universities network. The Standard establishes the framework for universities to:

1

benchmark their cultural diversity and inclusion policies and practices across the organisation

2

identify where and how further efforts could be directed

3

assess progress over time.

The other elements of the network support, as well as enhance, the purpose of the Standard.

Yashani Shantha / New Humans of Australia

The Welcoming Universities Standard is applicable to all universities in Australia.

Welcoming Australia has adopted Standards to enable member organisations to positively engage with diverse communities and contribute to broader social, environmental, and economic progress[17].

A Standard provides clear guidelines for an organisation's activities and sets practical, achievable goals to foster optimal community benefits. Standards are based on the consolidated results of research and experience and establish a common language that defines quality outcomes and how to achieve them[18].

The Welcoming Universities Standard is based on evidence from Welcoming Australia's initiatives, and references the work of Welcoming organisations in other parts of the world.

The Welcoming Universities Standard has been developed through close consultation with leaders in higher education, sector-wide consultation with university students, staff and communities across Australia, and a detailed review of existing university policies and frameworks.

The Standard aims to foster a culture of welcome and belonging in participating Australian universities that benefits all students, staff, and visitors. It provides a framework for member institutions to:

- Improve existing cultural diversity and inclusion initiatives and strengthen their impact and relevance for the university community.
- Recognise the importance of embedding cultural safety and humility within university policy and practice.
- Create mechanisms for benchmarking and assessing impact.

Continued over…

- Lead research and praxis in the social inclusion space.
- Enhance the profile of desirable higher education destinations for prospective students and sought-after employers for professionals.
- Foster an enhanced public reputation in the community.
- Identify opportunities for shared learning and positive connections across university divisions.
- Encourage conversations about how universities can foster and build networks to improve inclusion and belonging.

The Standard complements broader sector efforts to improve equity, access, participation, success and belonging in higher education. It aligns with the expectations of the Higher Education Standards Framework as regulated by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), and the Australian Government's equity initiatives, including Needs-Based Funding and funding for outreach initiatives.

Together, these frameworks and initiatives support improved outcomes for students from underrepresented backgrounds, including First Nations students, students from regional and remote communities, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disability, and other cohorts who may experience barriers to higher education participation, belonging and success.

The Welcoming Universities Standard recognises universities are already working to foster inclusion and participation for various groups.

In developing the Standard, close attention has been paid to the Australian Universities Accord process and the areas of focus within it. The Welcoming Universities Standard extends on a number of recommendations in the Accord to grow a culture of welcome and the experience of belonging for all university students, staff, and communities.

Welcoming Universities also recognises the critical and complementary work driven by existing standards, plans, charters, campaigns, and communities of practice.

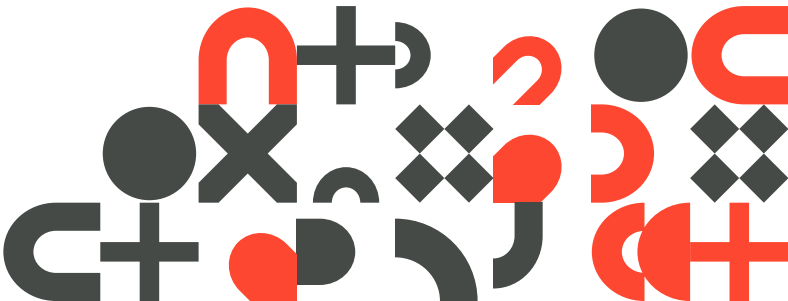
The QILT Student Experience Survey (SES) provides comprehensive data on students' perceptions of their higher education experience, including measures of Overall Educational Experience, Skills Development, Teaching Quality and Engagement, Peer Engagement, Student Support and Services, and Learning Resources. These indicators provide valuable insights into student learning, engagement, support and success, and can help institutions identify opportunities to strengthen belonging, inclusion and the quality of the student experience[19].

The Athena Swan Charter is a framework to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research, providing direction on collecting and analysing data, assessing culture, evaluating policies, identifying priorities, developing and implementing action plans, and evidencing progress and impact[20].

The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification provides a framework for embedding and assessing community engagement across institutional strategy, teaching, research and partnerships, with an emphasis on reciprocal relationships and mutually beneficial outcomes for universities and the communities they serve[21].

The *Times Higher Education* Impact Rankings assess universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[22]. Rather than duplicate this work, the Welcoming Universities Standard increases a university's alignment with the goals and is likely to impact their ranking positively.

The Welcoming Universities Standard sets the national standard for cultural diversity and inclusion policy and practice in higher education.



Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are *a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future*. The goals set social, environmental, cultural and community sustainability targets and provide a robust framework for sustainable development. The Welcoming Universities Standard has five SDGs embedded within the criteria and indicators across several categories:

- **Goal Four – Quality Education:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **Goal Eight – Decent work and economic growth:** Promote sustained, inclusive, sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
- **Goal Ten – Reduced inequalities:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- **Goal Eleven – Sustainable cities and communities:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- **Goal Sixteen – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Most relevant to the work of Welcoming Universities are goals eleven and sixteen. Goal eleven speaks to ideas of cultural safety, inclusivity and creating culturally appropriate spaces and places that are resilient to change.

Goal sixteen reflects the importance of universities being accessible to all, supporting opportunities for diverse peoples, and reflects how critical it is for universities to decolonise and improve social inclusion practices[23].

Abhishek Chaudhary / Unsplash

Terms and definitions

For the purpose of this document, the following terms and definitions apply...

culturally diverse groups

Individuals, groups, and communities that are indicative of people's cultural and linguistic diversity. It needs to be acknowledged that the use of 'culturally diverse groups' is a profoundly inadequate way to describe cultural identity, racial identity, linguistic identity, and nuance within these identity groups. It also does not reflect the marginalisation different identity groups can experience and the intersectional experience of cross-identification.

In this context, it is used with caution as a broad descriptor for international students, culturally and racially marginalised communities, migrant communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and forcibly displaced peoples[24] [25].

cultural humility and cultural safety

Cultural humility moves beyond cultural awareness and competency. Instead, it is a process where an individual learns about other cultures and examines their cultural beliefs and identities. It emphasises intersectionality and understanding one's own implicit biases [26] [27].

Cultural safety requires more than being aware of other cultures and respecting everyone. Cultural safety ensures all individuals feel spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically safe. Cultural safety respects and empowers all identities [28] [29].

First Nations/People/s

'Peoples' acknowledges the plurality and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and that hundreds of different Nations, languages, cultures and territories exist. 'First Peoples' is a collective name for the original Peoples of Australia and their descendants and is often used interchangeably with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. 'First Nations' and 'First Peoples' are terms that recognise the international law status and the ongoing un-ceded sovereignties of First Peoples [30].

Forcibly displaced peoples

The UNHCR defines 'forced displacement' as displacement as a result of persecution, conflict, generalised violence or human rights violations [31].

- **people seeking asylum**
  People seeking asylum have left their country and are seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country but haven't yet been legally recognised as refugees and are waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim [32].
- **refugees**
  Persons outside their country of origin for fear of persecution, conflict, generalised violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection.

migrant/s, migrant community/ies

Individuals of any immigration status born overseas. They can include culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people, refugees, people seeking asylum, and temporary or permanent residents.

receiving community/ies

All Australian-born residents not covered under the definition of migrant community. This includes Indigenous communities and previous generations of migrants. It is noted that migrant communities can also form part of receiving communities. This language hopes to be inclusive of that.

social cohesion

The willingness of members of a society to cooperate to survive and prosper. Social cohesion broadly incorporates five domains:

- belonging
- social justice and equity
- participation
- acceptance and rejection legitimacy
- worth.

social inclusion

The act of enabling all groups of people within a society to have a sense of belonging and to be able to participate in community life. It is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice and human rights, and the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.

Adopting the Standard and formal Accreditation

Assessing and planning actions against the Standard puts universities in a solid position to uphold principles of access and equity and, as a result, strengthen inclusion for all.

Adopting the Welcoming Universities Standard is a voluntary process for which there are no legal or mandatory requirements. However, formal accreditation is administered by the Welcoming Australia Secretariat as follows:

Accreditation requires member institutions to substantiate their compliance with each indicator of the Standard. Universities seeking formal Accreditation are required to provide satisfactory documentary evidence to be reviewed and renewed every four (4) years:

- 'Evidence' refers to the demonstrated existence of an active or planned activity, program, policy, governance mechanism or other forms of action against each indicator of the Standard.

Gokul Bharathi / Unsplash

- 'Documentary' refers to material that can be reviewed and assessed. This may include reports, meeting resolutions or minutes, audio-visual material, web or social media content, or anything substantiating the university's compliance with a given indicator.
- 'Satisfactory' means that the evidence supplied demonstrates compliance with the intention of the relevant indicator or that the university is sufficiently progressing towards this level of achievement.

A rubric defining levels of compliance with the Standard is provided on page 28 of this document.

It is recommended that each participating university specify and commit to a schedule for regularly maintaining and updating documentary evidence. This schedule should align with the university's internal review and reporting commitments where possible. As noted, formal submissions for renewing Accreditation should be made to Welcoming Australia every four (4) years.

A network that inspires and supports Australian universities to develop a culture and practice of welcome, inclusion and belonging.

Our Vision

Reading the Standard

The Standard is organised under the following four (4) categories:

1.0 Leadership

2.0 Social and cultural inclusion

3.0 Teaching, learning, and research

4.0 Places and spaces

Each **Category** contains **Principles**, **Criteria**, and **Indicators** against which the university's efforts can be assessed and is structured as follows:

The content of the Standard is designed to be adaptable to the specific institutional context of each participating university. Adaptations to the Standard may be proposed in discussion with the Welcoming Universities Secretariat and Advisory Committee.

1.0 Leadership

Welcoming Universities lead by example and demonstrate, through policy and practice, inclusive leadership across the university operations in teaching and learning, research and development, and community engagement.

Welcoming Universities demonstrate leading practice in welcoming and inclusion, creating a culture of welcome and a sense of belonging for all staff, students, and the broader university community. They lead by example and demonstrate through policy and practice inclusive leadership across the university operations in teaching and learning, research and development, and community engagement.

A Welcoming University respectfully acknowledges the past and present Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land – the First Nations peoples. It recognises the colonial structure of higher education institutions and actively works to make these spaces more culturally safe and inclusive for First Nations and culturally diverse peoples.

Through a comprehensive commitment to social inclusion and placing a high value on cultural diversity, Welcoming Universities work to embed and advance a culture of welcome in all aspects of university business.

Criteria and indicators

1.1 The university publicly acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's Traditional Owners. It recognises the colonial legacy within higher education and actively works for cultural safety within the institution, foregrounding Indigenous perspectives and pursuing reconciliation work.

The university:

1.11	Implements an action plan (or similar) to meet the commitments of the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy.
1.12	Acknowledges First Nations Peoples in policies, initiatives, documents, communications and public events.
1.13	Profiles First Nations staff, students, and the community to share and centre Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and achievements.
1.14	Partners with First Nations Peoples to provide non-Indigenous peoples with opportunities to learn about First Nations history, knowledge, and culture.
1.15	Protects Country, including culturally safe and dedicated spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, respecting Traditional Owners' environmental protocols and preferences.

1.2 The university is committed to cultural humility and safety. It recognises institutional biases, leads conversations about cultural safety, and is focused on creating a culturally safe space where everyone feels respected and barriers to inclusion are removed.

The university:

1.21	Ensures all staff have access to cultural humility and safety training; executive and senior staff must undertake this training.
1.22	Embeds cultural safety within university policy and processes, informed by culturally diverse and First Nations knowledge and perspectives.
1.23	Supports connections and shared learning between culturally diverse and receiving communities to bring these communities together.
1.24	University leadership consults with diverse cohorts on major decisions to ensure that they reflect the broader university community's needs and perspectives.
1.25	Facilitates opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders and communities, culturally diverse communities, and receiving communities to partner, co-design and participate in various activities that build connections across these communities.

2.0 Social and cultural inclusion

Welcoming Universities strive to create an environment where everyone feels they belong.

This includes embedding anti-racism policies and practices, promoting a welcoming culture, and equipping staff, educators, researchers, and students with the knowledge and tools to make university experiences as positive, accessible, and inclusive as possible.

The strategies, policies, and operations of Welcoming Universities reflect an appreciation of the value of diversity in higher education and mitigating unequal outcomes for different groups.

Criteria and indicators

2.1 Promoting welcome, anti-racism, and inclusion values for all who study, work at, and visit the university.

The university:

2.11	Ensures that key strategic documents include statements reflecting principles of welcoming, inclusion and celebrating diversity.
2.12	Facilitates opportunities for positive intercultural exchange amongst student and staff populations, both on and off campus.
2.13	Promotes a welcoming culture through strategic advocacy, public communications, and marketing materials across multiple platforms.
2.14	Leads or contributes to public anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives.
2.15	Promotes clear, safe, and transparent complaints mechanisms, ensuring staff are resourced and trained to receive disclosures.

2.2 Ensuring that diverse and marginalised voices are represented throughout the university.

The university:

2.21	Promotes the representation of people (students and staff) from culturally diverse groups in the leadership and administration of university committees, decision-making bodies, and advisory groups.
2.22	Ensures that policies and procedures for staff recruitment, retention, and promotion reflect a commitment to cultural inclusion.
2.23	Recognises and promotes the success of students and staff from diverse social, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

2.3 Ensuring that diverse and marginalised voices are supported throughout the university.

The university:

2.31	Collects data to quantify the diversity of student and staff populations and understand the quality of their experiences.
2.32	Provides culturally specific support services (health, employment, visa support) with staff trained in cultural humility and safety and with an understanding of students' intersecting identities.
2.33	Delivers specific programs for culturally diverse students, supporting their transition in, through, and beyond university, including into the workforce.
2.34	Advocates for and supports forcibly displaced people seeking access to higher educational opportunities.

3.0 Teaching, learning, and research

Welcoming Universities recognise their pivotal and unique role in society for advancing knowledge, innovation, and human creativity.

Welcoming Universities are intellectually ambitious and understand that the best environments for research and knowledge production encourage diverse participation in exercises of academic thought, debate, and experimentation.

Student outcomes and experiences benefit from high levels of diversity in the classroom[33]. Welcoming Universities create a higher education experience that allows students to interact with and learn from people from different backgrounds.

Teaching is critical for ensuring students develop intercultural skills and that all alumni are equipped to face the future's social, cultural, economic, and sustainability challenges[34].

Criteria and indicators

3.1 Supportive of the diverse student cohort, creating equal opportunities for success.

The university:

3.11	Monitors and improves the student experience and quality of teaching using measures of student satisfaction, engagement, and belonging.
3.12	Provides ongoing training opportunities for students and staff to develop intercultural knowledge, literacy, and communication skills.
3.13	Builds the capacity of teaching staff (including sessional staff) to meet the learning requirements of diverse student groups in the classroom, including migrants, forcibly displaced people, and international students.

3.2 Improves access to university study and higher education career pathways for a diverse student cohort.

The university:

3.21	Develops considered outreach programs, learning pathways, and educational partnerships with local schools and service providers to engage and serve culturally diverse groups.
3.22	Supports postgraduate study opportunities for culturally diverse student cohorts through opportunities such as scholarships and financial support.
3.23	Facilitates career pathways in higher education and research for candidates (including Early Career Researchers) from diverse backgrounds, including international students on temporary visas.

3.3 Embeds diverse knowledge and perspectives into research, teaching and learning, and university policy and processes.

The university:

3.31	Ensures that teaching, pedagogy and learning materials are developed and conducted equitably for diverse student cohorts, including integrating language supports for students from non-English speaking and plurilingual backgrounds.
3.32	Funds and promotes research that addresses racism, inequality and exclusion and embeds the lived experiences of culturally diverse and First Nations people.
3.33	Builds the capacity of scholars to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and frameworks, as well as non-Western and Global South perspectives, into research designs and educational curricula.

Continued over…

3.4 The University employs a workforce that is inclusive and diverse and invests in supporting and championing this workforce:

The university:

3.41	Resources and rewards cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in staff recruitment, retention, and progression.
3.42	Ensures that barriers such as unconscious bias, which may limit diversity, equity and inclusion in the university's employment practices, are being identified and addressed.
3.43	Utilises a comprehensive staff engagement survey to benchmark and measure staff satisfaction, engagement, and belonging for culturally diverse groups.
3.44	Applies innovative approaches to ensure that University employment and career progression opportunities are promoted to a diverse range of potential applicants, with support in place (language, networking opportunities, additional supports) to improve their chances of success.

Joel Mott / Unsplash
Setting the national standard for cultural diversity and inclusion policy and practice in higher education.

4.0 Places and spaces

Place is critical in higher education[35]. Welcoming Universities work to actively develop physical and online spaces that enhance student learning experiences, teaching, research, and social interaction.

Campuses are planned, built, (re)developed, and managed to maximise safety, accessibility, and environmental sustainability. The university's built environment reflects the cultural heritage of the Traditional Owners and recognises the cultural and faith diversity of staff and student populations.

Welcoming Universities are also connected to the broader community they are located within, engaging beyond the campus and connecting with the community.

Criteria and indicators

4.1 Creating inclusive physical and online spaces that are culturally safe for diverse student, staff, and visitor communities.

The university:

4.11	Provides high-quality, accessible, and culturally safe spaces (on campus and online) for teaching, learning, and social activities.
4.12	Ensures that cultural inclusion and access elements are included in guiding documents for tender or procurement.
4.13	Resources specialist staff across the university to serve culturally diverse cohorts.
4.14	Provides appropriately fitted and resourced spaces and facilities that meet staff and students' cultural and faith needs.
4.15	Facilitates the delivery of training to staff and educators that enhances online safety.
4.16	Works to build community connections and pathways, encouraging broader engagement with university facilities and resources.
4.17	Ensures that signage in public spaces is inclusive of the diverse community.

4.2 Places and spaces recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and migrant and culturally diverse heritages and support ongoing engagement with these spaces by these communities.

The university:

4.21	Partners with First Nations peoples to ensure that places and spaces include acknowledgement of First Nations people, stories, significant events and languages.
4.22	Includes collections in art museums, galleries or cultural spaces that celebrate and showcase First Nations, migrant and culturally diverse heritage and contemporary works from these communities.
4.23	Supports First Nations, migrant and culturally diverse communities to use university spaces and places for cultural celebrations and intercultural connection.

Jeswin Thomas / Unsplash

Assessment and Accreditation

The Welcoming Universities Standard has a range of accreditation levels responsive to Australian universities' capacity and diversity.

Assessment and accreditation against the Welcoming Universities Standard is available to all members of the Welcoming Universities network. Members are not obligated or required to undertake accreditation or progress through the accreditation levels. However, it is a valuable framework for benchmarking and advancing welcoming, inclusion and belonging in a university. Accreditation expires (and can be renewed or progressed) every four (4) years.

Level	Description	Assessment
Established WELCOMING UNIVERSITY	An **Established Welcoming University** has taken considered action towards being more welcoming, inclusive, and building belonging. Established Welcoming Universities are strongly engaged with the Welcoming Universities network and are key drivers of cultural change within the sector. They have a clear assessment of their current position.	Mandatory criteria and indicators across all four Welcoming Universities Standard categories have been met (20 indicators). A Welcoming Universities assessor verifies the application.
Advanced WELCOMING UNIVERSITY	An **Advanced Welcoming University** celebrates success in initiatives, policies and practices that foster welcoming, inclusion and belonging for university students, staff, and communities. Advanced Welcoming Universities are showing leadership in their approach to welcoming work and are prominent network members.	Mandatory criteria and indicators across all four Standard categories are met. Additional indicators are also met (60% of all indicators, 27 indicators met). A Welcoming Universities assessor verifies the application.
Excelling WELCOMING UNIVERSITY	An **Excelling Welcoming University** is setting and achieving targets across its full range of services and partnerships. An Excelling Welcoming University is leading welcoming work, they are an example of success to other members of the network, and they are striving for belonging for all.	Mandatory criteria and indicators across all four Standard categories are met. Additional indicators are also met (90% of all indicators, 41 indicators met). A Welcoming Universities assessor verifies the application.

Accreditation Scoring Rubric

Evidence category:

University policy/plan/ framework evidence

Compliance Level/s:

1. **No compliance**
   No evidence of the existence of a relevant policy/plan/strategic framework.

2. **Low compliance**
   A relevant policy/plan/strategic framework is in the planning or development phase.

3. **Partial compliance**
   There is a relevant and current policy/plan/ strategic framework, but no plans for review exist; there is no clear party responsible and/or desired outcomes detailed.

4. **High compliance**
   The relevant policy/plan/strategic framework is current and regularly reviewed, spanning (at least) the four-year Accreditation period.

   Key responsibilities and/or intended stakeholders are defined, along with desired outcomes/measures.

5. **Full compliance**
   The policy/plan/strategic framework is embedded in various functions in the university.

   Policies are active across a range of functions/ departments in the university.

   As well as responsibilities being defined, there is advocacy from senior leaders within the university (e.g. Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor in key portfolios).

   Evaluation practices exist to continuously improve policy.

Evidence category:

Implementation evidence

Compliance Level/s:

1. **No compliance**
   No evidence of implementation of relevant policy.

2. **Low compliance**
   Implementation is in the planning or development phase.

3. **Partial compliance**
   Some activities exist, but these may be irregular, isolated or have only partially defined target groups; they could be made better to meet the needs of target audiences.

4. **High compliance**
   There are a range of established activities, with clearly defined target audiences and outcomes. Activities are tailored to meet the needs of intended stakeholders.

   Reference groups or project leads have responsibility for delivery, and evaluation measures may be present.

5. **Full compliance**
   Practices are normalised as part of daily operations and have been proven successful in meeting the needs of stakeholders. There is evidence that any content is accessed and used by target audience(s).

   An evaluation process exists to improve desired outcomes.

   There may be a history of implementation, with demonstrated actions and outcomes.

Compliance and good practice

The International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance defines a Standard as a "document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory".

ISEAL views a Standard as a powerful market- based approach for creating positive social, environmental and economic change, and driving transformation in how entities deliver goods and/or services. A Standard defines what is expected and sustainable for a particular sector, drives and maintains change with a verification process, and has additional tools and activities in place for tracing certified goods and/or services. Through all of this, a Standard brings together all entities in the ecosystem and builds their capacity as they move from baseline to higher performance standards.

Standards are living documents that reflect the societal understanding of good practice for a given sector or industry. As such, the Standard will evolve.

New insights gained from the implementation of the standard, plus increased interest from stakeholders due to uptake of the Standard, will yield new knowledge and improvements that need to be integrated into the Standard's requirements. Common practice is to review a standard every three to five years and Welcoming Universities is committed to continuous improvement.

The development and revision of *The Welcoming Universities Standard* has been guided by ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice and Credibility Principles.

In the development of this Standard, Welcoming Universities has extensively consulted across the university sector, and with associated communities.

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