

Indigenous Student Success Program

Performance Report

2023



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Acknowledgement of Country

The University of New England respects and acknowledges that its people, courses and facilities are built on land, and surrounded by a sense of belonging, both ancient and contemporary, of the world's oldest living culture. In doing so, UNE values and respects Indigenous knowledge systems as a vital part of the knowledge capital of Australia.

We recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of the Aboriginal community and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future.

Welcome to Country by Anaiwan artist, Larissa Ahoy.

My painting is a representation of the University of New England and its relationship with different communities from all over. The circle in the middle with the lwata represents the University itself, as it is situated on Anaiwan land, and the totem for Anaiwan Country is the lwata. The circles on the top represent the many cultures and heritages from all over the world, and they are all connected with a pathway that leads to UNE. The bottom circles represent the UNE campuses which sit on other nations, connected as well with the UNE in Armidale. The smaller dots are the students, staff and workers who make UNE a success. The line of dots through the middle depicts the journey in which students take to make it to UNE.



Acknowledgements

The Oorala Aboriginal Centre has produced this report on behalf of the University of New England and would like to thank the Office of the Chief Operating Officer; Divisions of Student Experience; Education Futures, Research; Finance; Brand, Marketing and Business Development; Faculty of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Education (HASSE); Faculty of Medicine and Health (M&H), and; Faculty of Science, Agriculture, Business and Law (SABL).

Samantha Fowler Acting Director, Oorala Aboriginal Centre

Document Purpose

The Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) is a Federal Government funding initiative that provides supplementary funding to universities to help Indigenous students take on university study and achieve successful outcomes (Full details of the Program are available online at ISSP Program). ISSP Grants are primarily focused on supporting Indigenous students who are financially disadvantaged and/or from remote and regional areas. Each Australian university receives ISSP funding based on enrolments, progression rates and course completions of Indigenous students. A special loading recognises the additional costs of assisting Indigenous students from regional and remote areas.

As an obligation of receipt of this funding, Universities are required to provide an annual Performance Report (PR) and Financial Acquittal (FA). This Performance Report is expected to include data for the preceding calendar year and outline the major strategies of governance, education and employment used by the University for improving the access, participation, retention, and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

This document and associated financial acquittal report the performance data and strategic directions taken by UNE in 2023 to support current and future Indigenous students to achieve success. It is not an exhaustive statement of all UNE's efforts but a summary of the key activities undertaken to support our Indigenous students. The functions of the report are to:

- To demonstrate that annual ISSP funding amounts received by UNE have been used according to the relevant Act (Higher Education Support Act, 2003) and guidelines (Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017) and
- To describe additional supports the university is committing to lifting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student and staff outcomes, given the supplementary nature of ISSP.

Document Protocols

This document is to be read in conjunction with the Indigenous Student Success Program - 2023 Financial Acquittal. A statement of review and endorsement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism, in operation at UNE throughout 2023, commences on page 21 of this document. The UNE ISSP-2023 Financial Acquittal has been included.

Document Data Disclaimer

Indigenous student data in this report were downloaded from dashboards with the Power BI "Business Intelligence Course Monitoring App" and/or the "Business Intelligence Enrolments and Load App" between 11 March and 19 April 2024. The data in the dashboards available within Business Intelligence Services Apps are updated through the UNE Data Warehouse nightly. They may differ slightly from what is reflected in this report.

Indigenous Student Success Program 2023 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)

Elements of the UNE Indigenous Education Strategy 2023-2025 are designed to build Indigenous educational aspirations and grow the Indigenous student body at UNE. The strategy has committed to enhancing academic pathways to UNE, developing new pathways and incentivising school leavers to consider higher education.

In 2023, 4.41% of all UNE enrolled students were Indigenous students. This is the highest percentage in UNE recent history and saw UNE rank highly compared with other Australian universities – although absolute student enrolments, Indigenous & non-Indigenous, decreased in 2023 at UNE to their lowest in 5 years. Being able to maintain and increase the proportion of Indigenous students when overall enrolments were falling reflects the work that has been undertaken by UNE and Oorala over the last 5 years. Further investment in new initiatives and innovations were made in 2023, which we hope to see the benefits from in years to follow.

Table 1: Indigenous Student Enrolments

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Indigenous Enrolments	990	1005	1038	1006	963
Total Enrolments	26,202	26,735	26,058	22,948	21,861
Indigenous % of All Enrolments	3.78%	3.76%	3.98%	4.38%	4.41%
New market growth	11,068	11,715	12,410	11,715	12,410

Entry Pathways

Internal Selection Program (ISP)

The ISP is a continuing program designed to provide alternate entry to university study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with professional work or community experience and any formal qualifications from TAFE or other training providers. The number of people who access university via this program is small compared to the other entry pathways available. However, the program remains key to our pathway options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Miroma Bunbilla

UNE continued to support this alternate entry program for the Joint Medical Program (JMP), coordinated by the Thuruu Indigenous Health Unit at the University of Newcastle. Miroma Bunbilla is a five-day intensive program designed to provide participants with an insight into studying medicine in the JMP and develop connections with services and facilities on campus. In 2023, three applicants indicated UNE as their preferred university, however all three applicants were unsuccessful and no new Indigenous JMP students were recruited that year.

TRACKS Tertiary Preparation Program

The TRACKS program continues to prepare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for undergraduate study. Students can access support and guidance as they investigate tertiary education and decide on their future.

In 2023, enrolments in TRACKS increased from 81 in 2022 to 98. Of these, 66 were continuing students, and 32 were commencing students.

Utilising the resources of UNE's Project Uplift, TRACKS lecturers made substantial changes to units in the program in 2023, focusing on clarity of information, accessibility and uniform design of the online learning sites. This was complemented by Oorala teaching staff collaborating with colleagues across the faculties in the inclusion of Universal Design for Learning and Trauma Informed practices in the units' design. Apart from pedagogical improvements, the project focuses on the inclusion of easy to access information for students requiring assistance or support regarding their overall well-being.



Scholarships

Wright College Scholarship (NEW)

In collaboration with Wright College, Oorala developed a new ISSP funded scholarship in 2023, which will be awarded in 2024 for the first time. The scholarship aims to encourage and support Indigenous students to experience life on campus during their study journey, removing as many financial barriers as possible.

This year long scholarship covers 100% of residential fees for a period of 6 months, and 50% of college fees for the remainder of the year. In addition, recipients will receive up to \$500 up front to assist with setup of their college room. There will be four scholarships offered in 2024.

ISSP Funded Scholarships

ISSP continued to fund a suite of scholarships in 2023, each designed to increase Indigenous access and participation in higher education at all levels. In 2023, there was an 18% increase in the total number of ISSP funded scholarships awarded, and a 16% increase in the total value of scholarships paid when compared with 2022.

Non-ISSP Funded Indigenous Scholarships & Prizes

UNE partners with our alumni, donors and benefactors to effect meaningful change through its Indigenous scholarship and prize program. In 2023, UNE secured almost \$90, 000 for Indigenous scholarships.

Table 2: ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2023 payments

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		TOTAL	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling	\$12,875.00	15			\$1,350.00	9	\$14,225.00	24
Undergraduate	\$127,375.00	64	\$44,250.00	10	\$26,250.00	30	\$197,875.00	104
Post-graduate	\$27,505.00	9			\$5,250.00	7	\$32,755.00	16
Other								
Total	\$167,755.00	88	\$44,250.00	10	\$32,850.00	46	\$244,855.00	144

School & Community Outreach

Student Recruitment Team Leader (NEW)

In 2023, the Oorala Centre appointed an Indigenous Student Recruitment Team Leader. This newly established role demonstrates UNE's strong commitment to increasing Indigenous access to higher education as well as fostering Indigenous leadership across all levels.

The position entails developing, coordinating, and implementing various aspects of Indigenous student recruitment and community outreach initiatives and programs. These efforts are geared towards fostering educational aspirations and facilitating Indigenous individuals' access to higher education opportunities. Existing access programs include the Oorala Experience Day Program and The Pathways Academy, as well as collaboration with other areas of the university for UNE Open Day, Careers Fairs and the UNE Careers Advisor Summit.

The Experience Day Program

In 2023, Oorala maintained its commitment to the Experience Day program, marking its successful sixth year of operation. This initiative provides high school students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in campus life. Participants engage in academic activities and explore campus amenities, including college accommodation, fostering a hands-on understanding of tertiary education.

In 2023, we implemented modifications to the program structure aimed at enhancing its appeal and benefits for both participants and their respective schools. The program extended over four consecutive days, providing schools with flexibility to select the number of days they wished to participate in. Additionally, we introduced concurrent academic sessions, enabling participants to tailor their experience by attending sessions aligned with their individual interests.

Initially, Oorala received expressions of interest from 18 schools. This led to 62 students from 10 schools attending. 20% of the year 12 students in attendance at the 2023 Experience Days, accepted an on campus offer at UNE in their first preference course for 2024.

The Academy

In 2022, Oorala successfully obtained funding from the NSW Department of Education and Training via the Innovation and Collaboration Fund for the establishment of the 'Pathways

Academy'. This initiative, conducted in partnership with six regional schools, aims to bolster educational opportunities within a regional education cluster.

The curriculum developed under the "Academy" umbrella has already been adopted by five regional schools. Expansion plans for additional modules and outreach to more partner schools are key priorities for the Academy in 2024.

National Indigenous Science Education Program (NISEP)

Once again, Oorala and the School of Science, UNE, collaborated with Macquarie University and Armidale Secondary College to deliver the National Indigenous Science Education Program (NISEP). This initiative involved the participation of 48 high school students across different year levels, ranging from years 7 to 12, in a series of diverse student-led science activities.

Careers Markets

UNE and Oorala continued to have an active presence across the NSW Careers Market in 2023. Connecting with the National Association of Prospective Student Advisers (NAPSA), the team identified several events within the UNE catchment area. The most successful engagement came during the Mid Coast CareerQuip in Taree and Careers on Country in Tamworth. UNE has campuses in both locations, demonstrating the success of our Placed Based strategy.

In the latter half of the year, the Student Recruitment Team Leader conducted an audit of our activity in this space over the last 5 years and developed a strategy for 2024 onwards.

School Networking & Engagement

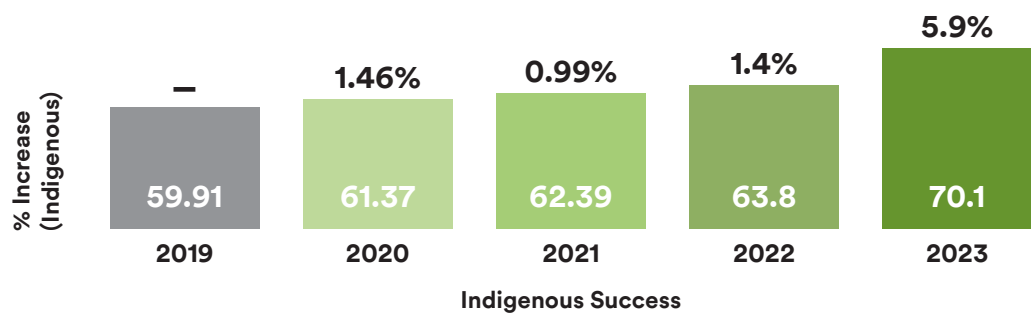
In the ongoing efforts of the Oorala Student Recruitment Team, significant strides have been made in fostering partnerships with schools statewide.

Oorala hosted another networking breakfast aimed at both primary and secondary institutions, facilitating discussions to explore potential avenues for collaboration throughout 2024. Additionally, Oorala remained dedicated to supporting end-of-year school awards within the Armidale region.

3. Progression (Outcomes)

At UNE, ISSP funding is primarily directed towards ensuring the progression and retention of Indigenous students. Our primary performance indicator continues to be improving the student success rate, with a particular emphasis on narrowing the gap in GPA between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students at UNE. Over the past five years, there has been a gradual improvement in the success rate of Indigenous students at UNE. However, in 2023, there was a notable leap, with the success rate reaching 70.1%, marking a remarkable 5.9% increase compared to the previous year.

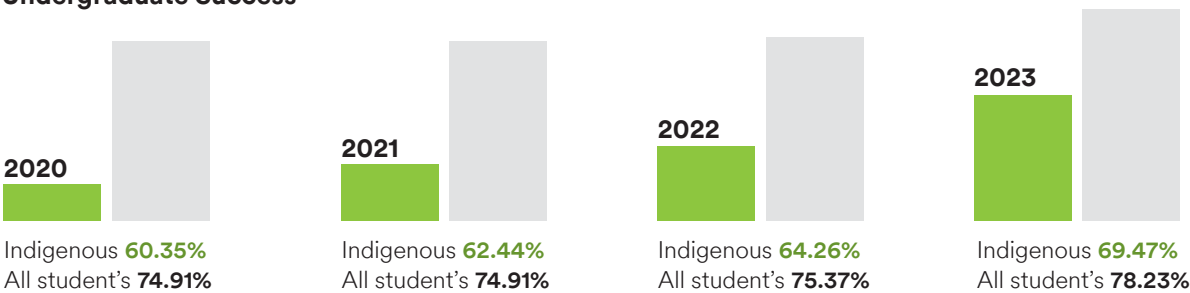
Table 3: Indigenous Student Outcomes



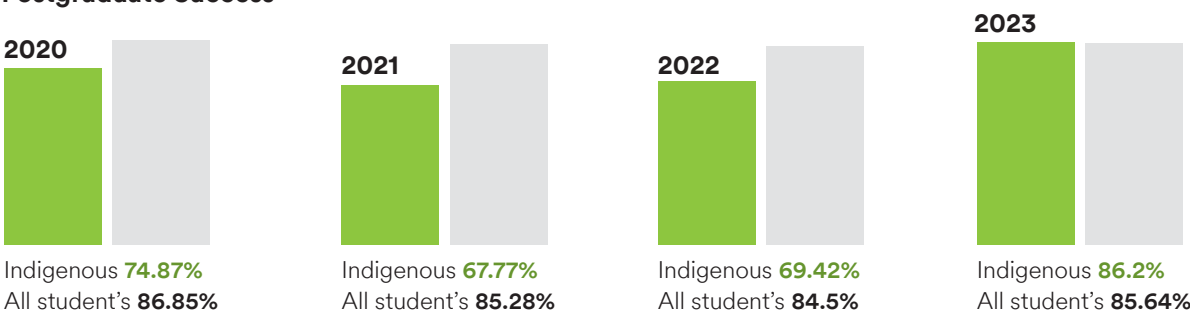
Another measurement that we are particularly proud of is the success rate of Indigenous postgraduate students, which notably exceeded that of all students at UNE.

Table 4: Indigenous student success (pass rate) (by % (all course levels, including HDR)

Undergraduate Success



Postgraduate Success



This can be attributed to our prioritisation of the Indigenous student experience, which has been driven at an institutional level through the Future Fit and Indigenous Education Strategies. Throughout the year, our initiatives were dedicated to advancing academic, cultural, community, financial, and professional development aspects. Our approach aimed to deliver personalised services tailored to the individual needs of each student, ensuring inclusivity and support across all endeavors.

Academic

Targeted Tutorial Assistance (TTA) Program

In 2023, Oorala increased its investment in academic support, with a particular focus on the TTA program. This program continued to provide individualised one-on-one tutoring, alongside group tutoring sessions. Furthermore, TTA maintained its regular weekly drop-in sessions on the Armidale campus, along with specialised preparation sessions tailored for Education students gearing up to take the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) assessment.

The success rate for students who utilised the service was 74.6%, 8.3% higher than for those who did not access the program. This was representative of results in 8 of the 10 academic schools at UNE. The increase in TTA support has directly contributed to the significant increase in success for Indigenous students at UNE in 2023.

20% of the academic workforce on this program identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Table 5: Tutorial Assistance Provided in 2023

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted	Total Sessions	Total hours	Expenditure
Enabling	32	306	519	
Undergraduate	141	3254	6546	
Postgraduate	9	293	597	
Other		62	112	
Total	182	3915	7774	\$582,036

Yinga Kara Orientation Program (NEW)

In 2023, Oorala rebranded its former Pre-Orientation program to the Yinga Kara initiative, inspired by the Anaiwan language's translation, "My Path". The three-day program now caters to both on-campus and online students, inviting all incoming students to participate. Yinga Kara aims to facilitate a smooth transition to university life through a comprehensive range of academic, social, community, and cultural activities. Participants are housed in college accommodations, meet UNE and community-based service providers, engage in team building and experience a tour of the local area with our Elders to better understand the history of our region.

Throughout 2023, 425 commencing students were extended invitations to participate in the Yinga Kara program. Promotion efforts for Yinga Kara were multifaceted, encompassing direct marketing campaigns through printed postcards included in student welcome packs, engagement via the UNE Student Relationship Management platform, dissemination across various social media channels, integration into Moodle platforms, and prominent visibility on the Oorala website. Additionally, proactive follow-up calls were made to students who had not yet registered. Financial assistance to attend was also made available to reduce the barriers that might affect students participating in the program. The program succeeded in attracting a total of 55 students across all three trimesters.

First Nations Student Success Program

Coordinated by the Associate Deans of Teaching and Learning in the Faculties, this program worked with staff across UNE and various external stakeholders and communities to advise, assist, and develop initiatives designed to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success and retention. It also provided academic staff with support and advice in embedding Indigenous knowledge systems in their units and assisting with the development of culturally appropriate learning activities. The program enabled mentorship and professional development for those employed as well.

The PASS@UNE

PASS@UNE continued to be available for undergraduate students in 2023. The program was expanded to include more offerings to students. Whilst the program is not only for Indigenous students, approximately 10% of participants identify as Indigenous. Of the 103 Indigenous students that attended PASS sessions in 2023, 16 attended PASS in more than 1 unit. The average Credit grade of Indigenous participants demonstrate how beneficial the program is.

One of the Indigenous PASS student leaders assisted with the Yinga Kara three-day pre-orientation program to further promote the program to Indigenous students at UNE. The program included an "Introduction to PASS" session, a presentation of strategies to succeed at university and participation in new student activities.



Cultural

Elders Program

Following a campaign to attract greater involvement by community Elders in the Elders Program, Oorala successfully engaged local Anaiwan Elder, Uncle Steve Widders. This initiative is dedicated to offering Indigenous leadership, cultural guidance and support to Indigenous students and staff at UNE and maintaining our connection with the local community.

Cultural Workshops

UNE introduced a new cultural workshop, Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. Participants gained a greater appreciation and understanding of the importance of these cultural practices and understand the difference between a welcome and an acknowledgement. 14 UNE staff registered for and completed this workshop.

UNE continued to conduct the Cultural Connections Workshops in 2023. The purpose of this workshop is to familiarise UNE staff with the significant cultural, social, and identity matters important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. 27 UNE staff registered for and completed this workshop.

Culturally Safe Campus

In its ongoing commitment to fostering cultural safety, UNE and Oorala have remained dedicated to creating inclusive environments for Indigenous students, staff, and visitors on our

campuses. Over the past year, a series of initiatives, activities, and events have been implemented to celebrate Indigenous knowledge and culture while promoting understanding and respect within the broader community.

- **The Voice:** A series of truth telling sessions were organised in 2023 to ensure that students and staff were well educated about the proposal before the Australian people and had access to well informed resources in the lead up to the referendum.
- **Dates of Cultural Significance:** UNE continued to acknowledge and celebrate national dates of cultural significance including NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, Sorry Day and the Myall Creek Massacre. UNE participation and connection with these events continues to grow.
- **UNE Ally Network:** The UNE Ally Network is a group of staff and students who are committed to making the University of New England a welcoming and inclusive environment for members of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- **Your Place Our Country Photo Competition:** UNE students study in rural and urban environments across Australia. In our inaugural competition we invited students to discover the First Nations' Country on which they study and share their 'place' with us. Almost 40 students rose to the challenge, submitting more than 100 photographs.
- **Community T-Shirt Competition:** The Oorala Aboriginal Centre launched its T-Shirt design competition in 2020, now in its fourth year. This initiative fosters community spirit, celebrates Indigenous culture, and promotes education at UNE. This year's winner, a local Year 6 student from an Armidale school, highlights the widespread participation from the wider community. The winning design is available through the university's online shop, making it accessible to the entire UNE community, and is worn proudly by staff at Oorala as a piece of their staff uniform.
- **Frank Archibald Memorial Lecture:** The Oorala Aboriginal Centre continued its long-standing tradition of honouring revered Aboriginal community member, Mr Frank Archibald. The Lecture is presented by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers who are leading professionals in fields such as education, law, social justice, government and the arts. Descendant of Frank Archibald, Ms Carol Vale, presented the 2023 lecture titled '*Power of Business to Drive Economic and Social Change within Indigenous Communities*'.



Community

TRACKS Scholar Peer Support Program

In line with UNE's strategic plan and in particular its focus on the establishment of "Communities of Practice in which all students and graduates are able to participate", the Scholar Peer Support Program is a continuing initiative that connects accomplished Indigenous students with those embarking on their journey in the TRACKS program. Scholars are eligible for New England Award points, illustrating the programs significance within the broader academic community. Feedback from participants has indicated that the program heightens their sense of belonging to the institution, many continuing their relationship with their peers once they progress to undergraduate study.

In 2023, the program welcomed two new scholars, Susan Lewis and Laura Bowen. Their role was critical to the success of the program as it amplified Indigenous success stories and fostered a supportive community.

Through a series of online evening sessions scheduled throughout the year, the program attracted over 70 participants. Each session fosters an environment for students conducive to sharing experiences, triumphs, challenges, and aspirations on their educational journey.

Student Engagement – Online & On-Campus

Recognising the significance of better engagement with its online students, Oorala made concerted efforts, considering that these students constitute 87% of the Indigenous student cohort at UNE. To enhance this engagement, they enlisted the services of Bananalife, an engaging online platform designed to unite staff and students. By leveraging Bananalife, Oorala aims to overcome the challenges of distance and isolation, fostering connectivity and community among its online learning community.

In 2023, Oorala intensified its efforts to enhance on-campus engagement, responding to a decline in engagement observed over the previous two years due to the impacts of COVID-19. Implementing a range of fresh initiatives, Oorala aimed to boost student engagement and foster connections among its staff and Indigenous students. One notable initiative was the re-introduction of student luncheons, which provided opportunities for students to interact with UNE and local service providers, such as the Armaijun Aboriginal Medical Service and Services Australia, facilitating meaningful connections and support networks. Oorala remained actively

involved in established engagement events, such as LifeSaver Day and the Austin Page Well Fair, which have historically offered valuable opportunities for student interaction.

In 2023, Oorala partnered with SportUNE, to continue its efforts to boost student well-being by launching weekly fitness sessions. These sessions, designed not only for physical health but also to enhance student engagement, align with UniSport Indigenous Nationals team training and UNE's Healthy Campus initiative. They provide students with a comprehensive wellness approach and promote a sense of community through shared activities. After a two-year break, Oorala assembled a full team of students to compete in the Indigenous Nationals Games. Through successful fundraising efforts, Oorala provided the team with brand-new, purpose-designed uniforms, ensuring they represented their institution proudly at the national level.

Oorala Awards

The 2023 Oorala Awards were an outstanding success seeing an increase in engagement in the nomination process as well as the actual event itself. We saw nominations grow by 60%, making this a highly competitive process this year. The Oorala Awards continue to be the largest reward and recognition event for all students and staff at UNE.

Seven students received awards in recognition of their academic excellence, impact to community, sporting achievement and student achievement when overcoming adversity. A new award was also introduced in 2023 which acknowledges the academic, social and professional efforts of a student ambassador. In addition, we acknowledged 5 staff members from the UNE community both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous who are committed to Indigenous excellence and representation at UNE.

PCYC Armidale Better Together Program

Oorala continued its ongoing three-year collaboration with Armidale PCYC, focused on cultivating stronger connections between the broader community and its youth. The program is designed to engage with 18-24 year olds to embrace a multi-generational, whole-community approach, incorporating cultural training to dismantle barriers and promote inclusivity. Oorala Student Ambassadors participated in 2023, providing an opportunity for students in the UNE community to connect with young people from the wider Armidale community.

Professional Development

Indigenous Student Ambassador Program

Responding to the UNE Indigenous Education Strategy, the Student Ambassador Program provides participants with opportunities to increase their readiness for work and career advancement (Indigenous Education Strategy, 2023-25, 3.4). In its second year, 9 Indigenous students took up roles of Ambassadors, undertaking personal and professional development activities and paid employment alongside their studies. Although not initially intended, the program fostered stronger relationships between Oorala staff and students, which proved critical to the students' academic success and personal wellbeing on several occasions in 2023.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid (NEW)

Eleven staff and student ambassadors participated in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid training. This program has better equipped the team to recognise and respond effectively to mental health crises. By investing in this professional development initiative, the organisation demonstrates its commitment to culturally sensitive care and proactive mental health support. These trained staff members are now empowered to provide critical assistance, reduce stigma, and foster resilience within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ultimately contributing to improved wellbeing and mental health outcomes.

National Indigenous Learning Support Conference (NEW)

Oorala sponsored 5 staff and student ambassadors to attend the National Indigenous Learning Support Conference hosted by James Cook University. This opportunity allowed them to present a paper highlighting the organisation's dedication to advancing Indigenous education and support services. Additionally, they gained insights from colleagues across the sector on best practices. This initiative reflects Oorala's proactive approach to staying informed about the latest research and innovations in Indigenous learning support. By participating in the conference and presenting their paper, these staff members not only contributed to the collective knowledge of the field but also acquired valuable insights and strategies to improve their work with Indigenous students.

Financial

Emergency Financial Assistance Fund (NEW)

Oorala initiated and activated a fund dedicated to offering emergency financial aid for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. This fund is managed at the discretion of the Student Experience team and is deployed when students have exhausted all recommended avenues of support, including bursaries, scholarships, and Centrelink assistance. The financial aid provided covers various essential needs such as textbooks, equipment such as stethoscopes, scientific calculators, subscriptions, emergency accommodation, and food vouchers.

4. Completions (outcomes)

In 2023, UNE witnessed its highest number of Indigenous completions in a single calendar year, with 108 Indigenous graduates, constituting 3.15% of all UNE graduates for that year. Oorala maintained its tradition of acknowledging student accomplishments with the Indigenous sashing ceremony. Furthermore, UNE took steps to support graduates transitioning into the workforce by establishing a new identified role within the UNE employability and careers team.

Table 6: Student Completions 2021-2023

Student Completions	2021	2022	2023
Indigenous Graduates	100	105	108
All Graduates	3653	3222	3434
% Indigenous Graduates	2.74%	3.26%	3.15%

Indigenous Sashing Ceremony

The sashing ceremony is an opportunity for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduands to proudly join with their family and friends along with the team at Oorala to celebrate their success and academic achievements. Almost half of our 2023 graduates were able to attend the sashing ceremony in person.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Careers Coach (NEW)

In August 2023, the UNE Career team launched an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Coach position as part of its services. This role emphasises inclusivity, honours cultural diversity, and acknowledges the specific needs and aspirations of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The position is funded by HEPPP.

By including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Coach, the university addresses the disparity in education and employment facing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by providing tailored, proactive, and transformative support and career guidance. The program introduced workshops for all on campus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students hosted at Oorala. A series of one-on-one career coaching appointments were available to students. These appointments included guidance and support on study choices connecting to career opportunities, along with assistance in resume and job applications.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Coach also co-facilitated a fortnightly online tutorial in the unit DYPP100 - [Demonstrate Your Professional Preparation](#).

5. Regional and remote students

UNE operates several campuses and centres (UNE Armidale, UNE Sydney, UNE Tamworth and UNE Taree), all servicing areas with significant Indigenous populations.

Aligned with UNE's strategic plan, Future Fit, our place-based initiatives are good examples of the university tailoring "our students and communities experience according to specific needs." Further, they illustrate UNE's commitment to empowering communities through tailored offerings aligned to the "needs and aspirations" of Indigenous communities in the regions.

Over the past 4 years, total Indigenous student enrolments across all course types including HDR, have remained steady with the majority of Indigenous students coming from regional and remote areas.

Table 7: Regional and Remote Indigenous Student Enrolments 2020 – 2023

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Regional	586	608	583	580
Remote	36	45	39	39
Total	622	628	602	619
% of Indigenous Cohort	61.9%	62.9%	61.8%	64.3%

UNE Tamworth: TRACKS Academic Support Program (NEW)

In Trimester 3, 2022, UNE Tamworth and Oorala commenced our place-based initiative targeting a specific cohort of commencing TRACKS students, and this continued throughout 2023. The place-based structure provides intensive TRACKS mentoring and tutorial support to our students from the Tamworth area. This allows students to remain in their community and take advantage of face-to-face interactions with the UNE Tamworth team, as well as access our online learning platform in a supported environment.

Students attend weekly tutorial sessions, access visits by lecturers from Oorala and learn via a mixed-mode delivery of learning content using ZOOM. The program is supported by the Indigenous Community Stakeholder Engagement Officer from UNE Tamworth and has developed a strong community of practice where students support and mentor each other.

Murdi Paaki Project

This project provides a model for successfully enabling access to tertiary education for Indigenous communities in remote and dispersed locations.

This HEPPP-funded project was run by UNE's School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences working closely with the team at Oorala. The project develops and strengthens an evolving strategic partnership between UNE and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA). Murdi Paaki is the peak body representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for more than 40% of NSW. There are twenty-three communities in the region which have substantial numbers of Aboriginal people living there (up to 60% of the population in some centres), and includes communities such as Bourke, Broken Hill, Cobar, and Tibooburra, to name a few.

The project commenced in Trimester 1, 2023, and has implemented a framework of support for Indigenous students within the Region via a place-based 'hubs-and-spokes' model. The major hub is located in Cobar, and students meet regularly there to share study sessions, and catch up with academics and other staff as needed. The students are supported by a project officer and qualified tutors while also using technology to connect with on-campus classes.

Seven students were recruited by this project into the TRACKS course, and with many of those students producing outstanding academic results in TRACKS and undergraduate units alike.

At the conclusion of the year, the Oorala academic team presented a report titled *"Placed-based Learning Experiences for First Nations Pathway Students"* at the National Indigenous Learning Support Conference hosted by James Cook University in 2023. The paper investigated the hyflex and place-based learning initiatives integrated into the delivery of the TRACKS tertiary preparation program.

Table 8: ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		TOTAL	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2022 Payments	\$83,375.00	41	\$49,875.00	16	\$33,000.00	31	\$166,250.00	88
B. 2023 Offers	\$279,000.00	62	\$117,000.00	13	\$21,000.00	28	\$412,500.00	103
C. Percentage (C=B/A*100)							251%	
2023 Payments	\$130,880.00	63	\$43,500.00	9	\$19,300.00	28	\$196,680.00	100

6. Eligibility

6.1. Indigenous Education Strategy

The *UNE Indigenous Education Strategy 2023-2025* is the primary strategy deployed across UNE to address the participation of Indigenous peoples in UNE programs. The Education strategy meets the requirements under Section 13 of the ISSP Guidelines.

The link to the current UNE Indigenous Education Strategy 2023-2025 is:
[Indigenous-Education-Strategy-2023-25_b.pdf \(une.edu.au\)](#)

6.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

The *UNE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2019-2024* provides strategic objectives and actions to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The link to the current (UNE) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2019-2024 is https://www.une.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/508146/Aboriginal-Employment-Strategy-2019-2024.pdf. The strategy was to conclude on 31 December 2023, but was extended into 2024 to allow UNE to conduct a comprehensive review of the 2019-2023 strategy.

As of 31st December 2023, the percentage of UNE staff that identified and were in full time/ fixed term employment was 2.24%. UNE will focus on the following activities in 2024 to ensure our target of 3% is achieved:

Outreach & Promotion: Intensify our outreach and promotional efforts across all states and territories to position UNE as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, providing employment pathways in professional and academic roles.

Graduate Employment Pathways: We will continue to grow and develop the Oorala student ambassador program to nurture our own talent while offering Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students the chance to financially support

themselves during their studies. Likewise, UNE will continue to invest in developing Higher Degree Research students to pursue a career in academia through the First Nations Student Success Program which provides mentoring from senior academics in their field of research, ideally creating a pathway to employment following the completion of their studies.

Recruitment Process: Review the existing recruitment processes at UNE, pinpoint areas where enhanced support for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander applicants can be offered and ensure that cultural considerations that may discourage individuals from applying are addressed, thus fostering a more inclusive application process.

Staff Retention: Explore approaches to improve staff retention among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals. This may involve expanding opportunities within the university, providing advanced training, and mitigating cultural burdens etc.

In 2023, UNE employed two senior Indigenous professional staff members. This included the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy) until August 2023, and the Director of the Oorala Centre. UNE also employed two senior Indigenous academics, Senior Lecturer - Faculty of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Education and Senior Lecturer – Faculty Medicine and Health.

6.3. Indigenous Governance Mechanism

The UNE Indigenous ISSP Governance Committee has responsibility for advising on, reviewing, making recommendations about, and monitoring the use of ISSP grants; and have authority within the governance structure of UNE.

The Charter of the UNE Indigenous ISSP Governance Committee states that the committee will comprise of:

- The Director of Oorala – Chair (Ex Officio)
- The Student Engagement Manager, Oorala-Co-Chair (Ex Officio)
- An Indigenous Academic (Eol - to be appointed by the DVC for one year) - Vacant in 2023
- The Coordinator of the Indigenous Academic Team Oorala (Ex Officio)
- An Elder in Residence (Eol - to be appointed by the DVC for one year)

Throughout 2023, the committee participants met monthly for ISSP governance and operational matters of the Oorala Centre.

In addition, the Director, Oorala collaborated weekly with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy) to discuss ISSP activities. These meetings ceased in August 2023 when the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy) departed the university. Following this, the Director, Oorala then met with the Deputy Vice Chancellor monthly.

Indigenous representation is included in the following committees of the University in 2023:

Academic Board;
Executive Team Committee;
DVC Team Committee;
University Research Committee;
University Teaching and Learning Committee;
STEMQ Committee;
Senior Leadership Committee;
Convocation;
Place Plus Advisory Committee;
Moree Steering Committee;
Indigenous Employment Governance Committee;
Graduation Steering Committee;
Safety, Wellness and Culture Review Committee;
Orientation Steering Committee;
Academic Portfolio Executive Committee;
WHS Committee;
NSW DVC/PVC Committee;
National UA DVC/PVC Committee.

Tamworth Aboriginal Working Group;
Campus Master Plan; Graduation Working Group;
Indigenous Education Strategy Working Group;
Indigenous Research Working Group;
Indigenous Employment and Career Development Working Group;
University Indigenous Collections.

