Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee Terms of Reference

Section 1 - Establishment

(1) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee is established under Part 3 Section 19(1) of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003.

(2) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee is established as an Engagement Committee reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor. It is constituted as a permanent fixture of the CDU organisational structure and appears on the CDU Organisational Chart.

Section 2 - Functions and Responsibilities

(3) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee is a formal engagement committee of the University. The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee will have both a jurisdictional and national focus and will provide high-level advice to the Vice-Chancellor and the University in relation to Australian First Nations matters including but not limited to:

a. Relationships between the University, government, education providers, and industry;
b. The strategic direction, development and excellence in First Nations academic programs, training and research;
c. External relationships, partnerships and opportunities relating to First Nations education, training and research and First Nations affiliations;
d. Consultation and communication with the First Nations communities of the Northern Territory; and
e. Advice on First Nations matters referred to the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee.

(4) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee will assist the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership in providing advice to the Vice-Chancellor on the development, implementation and review of the University's strategic goals for First Nations education as outlined in the CDU Strategic Plan, and the CDU Indigenous Leadership Strategy 2021-2025. The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee will provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership in monitoring the following:

a. Targets for the employment of First Nations staff in line with the First Nations Workforce Strategy and beyond;
b. First Nations representation on University Council;
c. The development of the University’s cultural competence in relation to First Nations;
d. The admission, progression and graduation of currently enrolled First Nations students and increasing the number and proportion of future successful First Nations students;
e. The extent of incorporation of First Nations Studies across the University’s courses;
f. The development and implementation of First Nations research objectives within CDU’s Research Strategy and beyond; and
g. Advice on additional initiatives to achieve the objectives of the CDU Strategic Plan 2021- 2026 in relation to First Nations outcomes.

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Establishment of Working Parties or Sub-Groups

(5) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee may, as it deems appropriate or desirable, establish working parties to undertake particular tasks in relation to a nominated function. A working party may include persons other than members of the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee.

(6) The role of such working parties or sub-groups is Engagement. Such bodies have no delegation to make any decisions which are binding upon the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee.

Section 3 - Membership

(7) The membership of the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee shall comprise the:

a. Vice-Chancellor;
b. Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership, ex officio;
c. A senior First Nations university academic ex officio;
d. Up to five First Nations persons external to the University selected based on their expertise in First Nations education and/or First Nations affairs, one of whom shall be Chair;
e. External First Nations members are encouraged to be sought from locations outside of Darwin, including Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and surrounds; and
f. Two First Nations student representatives.

(8) Membership may be reviewed from time to time as deemed necessary by the Committee.

Rights of Audience and Debate

(9) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee may invite any person – whether from within, or external to, the University – to attend specific meetings, or for specific items within a meeting, to assist the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee in its deliberations.

Section 4 - Chair

(10) The Chair for the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee will be appointed from the five (5) eligible external representative members on the Committee and will be reviewed biennially.

Section 5 - Secretary

(11) The Manager Business Operations, Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership (or nominee) shall act as secretary for the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee.

(12) Funds will be allocated on an annual basis to the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership to resource the secretariat, and to pay for sitting and/or travel fees incurred by Committee members, to be disbursed at the discretion of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership.

Section 6 - Term of Office

(13) Members of the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee (other than ex officio members) shall serve for terms of up to two (2) years, concluding on the anniversary of appointment.

(14) An appointed member may be appointed to serve for additional term/s provided that such member serves no more than three (3) consecutive terms or a maximum of six (6) years continuously.

(15) Twelve (12) months must elapse before a person having served the maximum three (3) consecutive terms is eligible to serve again with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership.

(16) Within these twelve (12) months, a member may still be appointed to a working party or sub-group tasked with conducting Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee business.

(17) A student member will hold office only while enrolled as a CDU student. A student member will be co-opted by the Committee.

Section 7 - Quorum

(18) The quorum for meetings of the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee shall be four (4) members including: one (1) student representative, two (2) community representatives and one (1) CDU representative.

Section 8 - Meetings

(19) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee will meet at least twice each year, once in each semester and where practical, meetings will alternate between the various regions of the Northern Territory. The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee will determine if more meetings are required in order to fulfil its responsibilities and may therefore call extraordinary meetings, resources permitting.

(20) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee Chair shall meet with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership and/or the Vice-Chancellor as required.

Section 9 - Resolutions of the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee

(21) Matters requiring a resolution by the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee are to be determined by consensus of the members present. The Chair shall have a deliberative and casting vote should a vote be required to determine a matter where consensus has not been achieved.

Section 10 - Agenda

(22) The agenda is to be distributed with supporting documentation at least seven (7) days prior to the advertised meeting date.

Section 11 - Minutes

(23) Meeting minutes will be taken and distributed within two (2) weeks following the meeting.

Section 12 - Reporting

(24) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee will report to the Vice-Chancellor and University Council regularly by way of a report.

(25) The Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee through the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor First Nations Leadership will submit an Annual Report of its activities in retrospect. This report will

a. include a self-assessment of the effectiveness of the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee in fulfilling its brief in the period under review;
b. advise on the continued appropriateness of the provisions of the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee Terms of Reference and any amendments which the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee believes necessary to improve efficiency and effectiveness; and
c. advise on the achievement of the specific objectives in the University's Strategic Plan for which the Vice-Chancellor's First Nations Engagement Committee has an Engagement role.

Section 13 - Conflicts of Interest

(26) Where a member has a real or perceived conflict of interest regarding an agenda item, they must declare this to the Chair at the commencement of discussion of the item, and be prepared to excuse themselves from the discussion, or the room, if required.

Section 14 - Non-compliance

(27) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct – Staff or the Code of Conduct – Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct – Students.

(28) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Code of Conduct – Staff and Code of Conduct - Students.

(29) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

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