



**NCSEHE**

National Centre for Student  
Equity in Higher Education



**Curtin University**

# FIRST NATIONS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

2024 Round: Guidelines

Make tomorrow better.

[ncsehe.edu.au](https://ncsehe.edu.au)

## Acknowledgement of Country

The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) and Curtin University acknowledge the First Nations people of this country and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

We deeply respect their cultural, spiritual and educational practices and aspire to learn from their ways of working.

Curtin University is honoured and grateful to have the privilege to maintain campuses on Whadjuk and Wungatha Country.

## 1. The First Nations Fellowship Program

The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) is launching the 2024 First Nations Fellowship Program.

The First Nations Fellowship Program will provide fully-funded fellowships for **First Nations (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander) Australians** working as researchers and practitioners in higher education, to complete a project that will inform an area of higher education practice and policy, via a combination of research, research translation, best practice implementation, evaluation, and knowledge transfer.

Fellowships are open to First Nations Australian staff of Australian universities currently receiving funding for equity programs through the Australian Government's [Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program](#) (HEPPP).

Up to **three** First Nations Fellowships will be awarded for 2024. The value of each Fellowship will be up to \$230,000 for one year, commencing in March 2024.

First Nations Fellows will have the opportunity to engage with the students, practitioners, administrators, and researchers in higher education equity.

In addition, as part of their program, First Nations Fellows are encouraged to propose an engagement at an organisation that furthers their project work. This can take the form of a presentation, workshop or placement.

### 1.2 Key Dates

Applications open	<b>Monday, 21 August 2023</b>
NEW: Closing date for applications	<b>Monday, 6 November 2023 – 5pm (AWST)</b>
Acknowledging receipt of applications	<b>On receipt of proposal (via email)</b>
Consideration by NCSEHE First Nations Fellows Selection Committee and Grants and Fellowships Committee (G&FC)	<b>6 October to 20 November 2023</b>
NCSEHE Advisory Board confirmation of projects	<b>Late November 2023</b>
Notification of outcomes of selection process	<b>Late November 2023</b>
Funding agreement finalisation	<b>February 2024</b>
Project work	<b>February 2024 to February 2025</b>
Presentation at the NCSEHE Fellows Forum	<b>February/March 2025</b>
Project completion and acquittals	<b>March 2025</b>

## Aims and Obligations

### 2.1 Aims

The First Nations Fellowship Program will fund proposals that:

- Strengthen the quality, capability, scale, and capacity of Australia's First Nations researchers and practitioners.
- Strengthen Australia's overall capacity in higher education practice and implementation in relation to equity issues.
- Enable ground-breaking, robust, high-quality, and internationally competitive research that will build the peer reviewed evidence base and contribute to evidence-based policy development and practice.
- Facilitate interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches.
- Demonstrate leadership in translating high quality contributions by First Nations researchers to inform practice, and developing, implementing, enhancing, and promoting institutional evidence based best practice that improves access to and participation in Australian higher education.
- Raise the profile of higher education institutions' efforts to widen participation and support outcomes in higher education.
- Produce outcomes that can be applied nationally and/or be adopted by universities, including outcomes that are potentially *portable* across institutions and *scalable* across Australian higher education.
- Establish and build on national and international partnerships and collaboration in widening higher education participation.

### 2.2 Obligations

The NCSEHE, through the First Nations Fellowship Program will:

- Provide an exemplary training environment, and support for Fellows through the *Expert Reference Group*. Build world class capacity and capability among First Nations higher education researchers to develop Australia's next generation of research leaders.
- Develop First Nations Fellows' research skills, so that they can improve the understanding of research outcomes by equity practitioners, thus developing practitioners capable of better practice leadership at a national level.
- Develop a national skills base to successfully translate and implement research outcomes, and provide evidence for the delivery of programs for Australian higher education students.
- Develop First Nations Fellows' connection to the national policy environment, providing skills and opportunities for communicating with policy makers.

## 2. Responsibilities

### 3.1 The National Centre for Equity in Higher Education

The NCSEHE's responsibilities in relation to the First Nations Fellowship Program, include:

- Convening the NCSEHE Grants and Fellowships Committee and its selection committee – the *First Nations Fellows Selection Committee* – one of whose duties is to select the First Nations Fellows (see Section 5.4).
- Entering into a funding agreement with each First Nations Fellow.
- Liaising with potential applicants to provide preliminary information and advice.
- Liaising with First Nations Fellows, once selected, to negotiate and clarify the detail of specific aspects of the proposed projects (including timeline, milestones, objectives and deliverables) which includes assisting in designing an individual program for each Fellow based on individual needs. This may include such things as, but not limited to, research methodologies, statistical and analytical approaches, media / research communication training, understanding the policy landscape and evidence-based policy formulation.
- Assisting in facilitating an *Expert Reference Group* for each First Nations Fellowship.
- Monitoring the progress of the projects, once underway, and assisting in facilitating collaboration, consultation, and testing of the Fellow's project findings, outcomes and recommendations with the Australian Government Department of Education, as required.
- Supporting and disseminating the work of First Nations Fellows through a production process (including peer review, proofreading and editing processes) that ensures Fellows' reports are of quality acceptable to the Australian Government and higher education sector.
- Organising the NCSEHE Fellows Forum to facilitate dissemination and discussion of project processes and outcomes of the First Nations Fellowships.
- Conducting an evaluation of the outcomes of the First Nations Fellowship Program.

## **3.2 First Nations Fellow's Home Institution**

The responsibilities of the First Nations Fellow's home institution include:

- Entering into formal agreements with:
  - The NCSEHE to cover project funding and milestones.
  - Other organisations, where this is required to cover details of the Fellow's placement.
- Managing the receipt of funding for the First Nations Fellowship from the NCSEHE.
- Maintaining responsibility for payments to the Fellow, including existing employee arrangements, such as workers' compensation insurance.

## **3.3 Organisations Engaging with First Nations Fellows**

The responsibilities of the organisations hosting First Nations Fellows include:

- Confirming suitability to host the engagement activity of a First Nations Fellow, particularly in the case of more involved engagements such as short-term placements.
- In the case of short-term placements, facilitate the Fellow's access to departmental personnel, and provide general IT access, building access and a physical place of work, while maintaining responsibility for issues pertaining to occupational health and safety.
- Providing advice and feedback on Fellow's Interim and Final Project Reports, where sought.

## **3.4 Australian Government Department of Education**

The responsibilities of the Department of Education include:

- Managing the Conditions of Grant for delivery of the First Nations Fellowship Program with the NCSEHE.
- Whenever possible, facilitate access to relevant departmental data.

## 4 Conditions of Grant

### 4.1 Eligibility and Application Process

First Nations Fellowships are open to First Nations Australian staff at eligible higher education institutions.

#### *Confirmation of First Nations Australian Identity*

Applicants for the First Nations Fellowships should be able to confirm that they:

- Are of First Nations (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander) Australian descent.
- Identify as a First Nations Australian person.
- Are accepted by a First Nations Australian community as a First Nations Australian, where confirmation can be provided by:
  - An official letter from a Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC).
  - An official letter of Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Heritage from a registered Aboriginal community organisation.

In addition, where an official letter of confirmation is not available, applicants can provide a statutory declaration outlining the circumstances under which they cannot provide evidence from a LALC or registered Aboriginal community organisation, and in turn, provide evidence and examples for confirmation of First Nations Australian status.

#### *Eligible Institutions*

Applicants must be a staff member at an eligible higher education institution. Eligible institutions include any institution which currently receive HEPPP funding:

<https://www.education.gov.au/hePPP/resources/20102023-higher-education-participation-and-partnerships-program-hePPP-participation-allocations>

Applicants must have the strong support of their home institution for a project that supports the Aims and Obligations of the First Nations Fellows Program set out in Section 2.

#### *Other NCSEHE Equity Fellowships*

Recipients of a NCSEHE Equity Fellowships from previous rounds are ineligible to apply for a 2024 First Nations Fellowship.

Applications may not be submitted to *both* the 2024 First Nations Fellowship and Equity Fellowship Programs.

## 4.2 Engagement

Applicants for the First Nations Fellowship Program are encouraged to engage with a suitable organisation dealing with issues of equity practice, research or policy, either in or directly affecting, Australian higher education. These include, but are not restricted to:

- The Australian Government Department of Education.
- State and Territory education departments.
- First Nations organisations directly dealing with issues of equity practice, research, or policy in Australian higher education.
- Other agencies, institutes and organisations.

Engagement can include one or more of a variety of activities, including a seminar, workshop, or a short-term placement.

Applicants will need to explain why a particular engagement is suitable as a component of the Fellowship and provide an indication of the organisation's capacity to support a visiting Fellow over a relatively short timeframe.

The purpose of an engagement component is to facilitate knowledge transfer and to enhance the ties and understanding between organisations within Australian higher education.

The Fellow is expected to act as a source of advice and knowledge transfer for the staff of the hosting organisation, particularly those in the higher education and related areas.

The nature and length of the engagement, including any work schedule and pattern of attendance, should be specified in the application.

Where necessary, NCSEHE will confer with the Fellow's home institution and the hosting organisation to enter a formal agreement covering the details of more involved engagement activities, such as placements.

## 4.3 Submission of a Final Report and Attendance at the NCSEHE Fellows Forum

The First Nations Fellowship will culminate with the submission and finalisation of a Fellowship Report by early 2025.

This will take place in conjunction with a presentation by the Fellow at the NCSEHE Fellows Forum, also scheduled to take place in February/March 2025.



#### 4.4 Selection Criteria

Criterion	Detail	Weight
<p><b>Alignment with the aims of the First Nations Fellows Program</b></p>	<p>The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates alignment with the First Nations Fellowship Program <u>as outlined in Section 2</u> of the document <i>including</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. strengthen the quality, capability, scale, and capacity of Australia’s First Nations researchers and practitioners.</li> <li>b. strengthen Australia’s capacity in higher education practice and implementation in relation to equity issues.</li> <li>c. enable ground-breaking, robust, high-quality, and internationally competitive research that will build the peer reviewed evidence base and contribute to evidence-based policy development and practice.</li> <li>d. facilitate interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches.</li> <li>e. demonstrate leadership in translating high quality contributions by First Nations researcher to inform practice, and developing, implementing, enhancing, and promoting institutional evidence based best practice that improves access to and participation in Australian higher education.</li> <li>f. produce outcomes that can be applied nationally and/or be adopted by universities. This includes outcomes that are both potentially <i>portable</i> across institutions and settings as well as <i>scalable</i> across Australian higher education.</li> </ul>	<p>30%</p>
<p><b>Capacity of the applicant to play a continuing, significant leadership role in equity in higher education research and practice</b></p>	<p>The applicant demonstrates a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. submission providing confirmation of First Nations Australian identity.</li> <li>b. track record of academic and/or professional track record relative to opportunity.</li> <li>c. record of leadership in research, equity practice and/or policy, relative to opportunity.</li> <li>d. capacity for development and potential career trajectory.</li> <li>e. capacity to make a significant ongoing leadership contribution at a national level to higher education research and practice.</li> </ul>	<p>30%</p>

<b>Demonstrated impact of the First Nations Fellowship</b>	<p>The applicant demonstrates the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. significance and scale of the issues identified.</li> <li>b. potential value to the sector of the proposed activities, knowledge gain, and knowledge transfer.</li> <li>c. viability of the activities and the proposed methodology for achieving the planned outputs and impact.</li> <li>d. capacity of the proposed project to generate influence and sector-wide impact particularly through interdisciplinary training, collaboration, and mentoring.</li> <li>e. potential for outcomes that can be applied nationally and/or be adopted by other universities.</li> <li>f. potential to produce publications that are of sufficient quality to be accepted by a peer-reviewed journal.</li> </ol>	20%
<b>Value for money</b>	<p>The extent to which the proposed Fellowship project achieves value with public money and delivers outcomes commensurate with, or exceeding, the level of investment, considering the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. outcomes of the Fellowship proposal in relation to the amount of funding sought.</li> <li>b. extent to which the proposed budget is appropriate, clearly justified, and transparent.</li> <li>c. demonstrated potential to achieve the project outcomes in a high quality and cost-effective manner.</li> </ol>	20%

## 4.5 Use of First Nations Fellowship Funding

The Fellowship funding is provided to cover:

- The relinquishing by the Fellow of all, or part of, their normal institutional duties during the period of the Fellowship (normally expected to be 12 months' full-time equivalent, but subject to negotiation of some flexibility and timing, depending on individual circumstances).
- On-costs associated with the Fellow's normal salary level.
- Travel and accommodation expenses to cover any period of placement, and travel nationally or internationally as appropriate to the project.
- Other costs to be incurred in relation to the specific project to be undertaken.
- Attendance at face-to-face meetings convened by the NCSEHE, including the NCSEHE Fellows Forum in February/March 2025.

The Fellowship funding will not cover:

- Institutional infrastructure charges or overheads.
- Computing hardware or software, unless a case can be made as to why this is not usually available from the applicant's home institution.

## **4.6 Reporting and Accountability**

Throughout the project, the First Nations Fellow will report on progress to the Grants and Fellowships Committee, via the NCSEHE, including the submission of an Interim Report.

At the conclusion of their project in February 2024, the First Nations Fellow will provide to the NCSEHE, the Final Report, setting out in full, activities undertaken during the Fellowship, the outcomes, the impact, and any materials generated.

The Final Report will be reviewed externally before it is published on the NCSEHE website and made publicly available. Report submission dates will be negotiated with the successful Fellows and recorded in the funding agreement.

First Nations Fellows will also be asked to provide drafts and details of any other publications or materials produced that are connected to their Fellowship. Where possible, support from NCSEHE and the First Nations Fellowship Program should be acknowledged in all such output.

Fellows will also be required to give a short report of any placement with a hosting organisation.

## **4.7 Payment**

Payments will be made to the home institution in two instalments, one upon execution of the funding agreement (80%) and one on acceptance of the Final Report (20%). The home institution will be responsible for making payments to the First Nations Fellow.

## 5 Application and Selection Information

### 5.1 Application Instructions

The **Application Pack** and **Guidelines** (this document) for the 2024 Round of the First Nations Fellowship are available at: <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/grants-and-fellowship/first-nations-fellowship-program/>

### 5.2 Lodgement and Processing

Please email your application to [ncsehe@curtin.edu.au](mailto:ncsehe@curtin.edu.au) by the extended deadline of **5pm (AWST time) Monday, 6 November 2023**.

### 5.3 Receipt of Application

Receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by email to the applicant, signatory of the institution's letter of support and institutional contact officer.

### 5.4 The Selection Process

The NCSEHE Grants and Fellowship Committee has responsibility for recommending First Nations Fellows to the NCSEHE Advisory Board, in accordance with the Selection Criteria set out in Section 4.4.

In undertaking its task, the Committee will perform a review and selection process via its *First Nations Fellows Selection Committee*.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an interview with the *First Nations Fellows Selection Committee*, which may take place in person or by videoconference. The cost of any travel required to attend an interview will be covered by NCSEHE. As part of this process, NCSEHE will also contact nominated referees prior to final selection of candidates.

The final selection of a First Nations Fellow rests with the NCSEHE Advisory Board. Bearing in mind the competitive merit based nature of the First Nations Fellowship Program, the NCSEHE Advisory Board reserves the right to not make an appointment where a suitable candidate(s) cannot be found.

Successful First Nations Fellows will be expected to commence in February 2024 or as negotiated in the funding agreement.