

STUDY AT UWA: A GUIDE FOR INDIGENOUS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

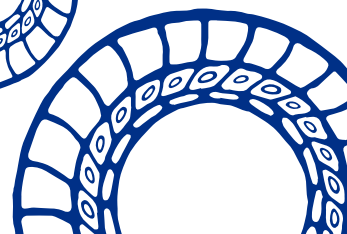
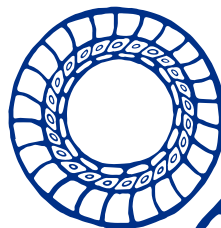
2026 Guide



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**



UWA OFFICE OF THE
PRO VICE CHANCELLOR
**Indigenous
Portfolio**



KAYA, WANJOO WELCOME TO UWA

Dear prospective students,
parents and guardians,

Welcome! We're delighted that
you're considering joining our
community here at The University
of Western Australia.

UWA is full of opportunities for
Indigenous students and we are
here to support you throughout
your educational journey. We know
that transitioning into university
life can be a big step and our team
are here to help with guidance,
encouragement and a powerful
sense of community.

It's important to us that you have
everything you need to achieve
your goals and thrive at university.
To do this, we offer great academic
assistance, such as tutoring, study
workshops and mentoring programs.

Beyond academics, we focus on
creating an environment where
you'll feel valued, connected and,
significantly, culturally supported.

From social activities and cultural
events to everyday guidance and
a welcoming community, we want
you to feel at home.

We know that financial pressures can
often be a barrier to university study.
That's why we provide key financial
support, including scholarships,
bursaries and assistance programs
to help make study more accessible.

This guide is just a glimpse into
the programs, services and support
available for Indigenous students
at UWA's School of Indigenous
Studies (SIS) and our home of
Bilya Marlee. We hope it helps
you imagine the many possibilities
that studying here can offer, and
we warmly invite you to learn more,
visit our campus and connect
with our team and students.

Thank you for considering UWA
for your future.

We hope to see you soon,
UWA Indigenous Student Services

“To all the mob out there who are considering uni,
I would say, ‘Take the leap!’. All of the hard things
of doing something different, moving away from
home and family ease as the support network
here at SIS is ready to pick you up when things
are difficult. You don't want to wonder what
could have been 10 years in the future.”

Taleah Ugle
Bachelor of Science (2025)



Front cover: Indigenous students
outside Bilya Marlee. (2021)

We run regular events for Indigenous students including our annual
Welcome BBQ where everyone gathers at Bilya Marlee to welcome
new students and returning ones. (2026)



UWA student Rikki Willcocks at the Smoking Ceremony with Uncle Barry Winmar as part of the SIS Welcome Back BBQ. (2026)

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA SITS ON WHADJUK NOONGAR BOODJA ALONGSIDE THE DERBAL YERRIGAN (SWAN RIVER).

It has been a place to gather and learn for tens of thousands of years, sharing life lessons through stories that have been passed down from generation to generation of the world’s oldest continuous culture.

During the Dreaming, the Waugul, or Rainbow Serpent, was the creator – the giver of life.

The Waugul made its way from the Darling Scarp to the Indian Ocean, leaving a trail of contours behind it. Every twisting movement scoured out the rivers, creeks, waterholes, lakes and valleys across Noongar boodja, the land of the Whadjuk Nation.

And so, the Waugul formed the Derbal Yerrigan, the Swan River, where it still resides today. The bilya, or river, is the umbilical cord of the land – a life force connecting Noongar people to boodja. So close is the connection, ‘river’ and ‘umbilical cord’ are known by the same name.

The river not only feeds bodies, but minds. Goordandalup (Crawley Bay), on the Derbal Yerrigan, has been a place to gather and learn for tens of thousands of years.

And just as the river flows through the Whadjuk Nation out into the Indian Ocean, and beyond, so too does our knowledge through the people that gather to learn at the University and then venture out into the world. It is our past, present and future.

And that’s where you come in. As an Indigenous student at UWA, you are part of this story, with our entire community behind you each step of the way. You’ll take your learning beyond the books and build skills and connections that will set you up for a career you’re passionate about.

The story of the swan has been shared by Dr Richard Barry Walley OAM. Dr Walley is a Noongar man and respected lecturer in Aboriginal culture. We acknowledge and thank Dr Richard Walley for sharing these stories.

UWA INDIGENOUS PORTFOLIO AND SCHOOL OF INDIGENOUS STUDIES

Within the Indigenous Portfolio, the Student Services team and School of Indigenous Studies, or 'SIS', support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to follow their passions and shape their futures.

We offer pathways to degree studies for Indigenous students, through UWA Bilya Bidi – Indigenous Pathway Program (formerly known as the Aboriginal Orientation Course), and teach the Indigenous Knowledge, History and Heritage major available through the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours).

Hundreds of Indigenous students study at UWA across pathway, undergraduate, postgraduate and research degrees. Our students are strongly represented in medicine, law, business and a range of disciplines that reflect the diversity of our community.

Our home is Bilya Marlee

At the UWA Crawley Campus in Perth, you'll find us at Bilya Marlee, meaning 'river of the swan' in Noongar. Here you'll find tutoring, career advice and wellbeing support from our Student Services team, along with study facilities such as a computer lab and common room just for Indigenous students.

Have a yarn with us

Our Student Services team can help with uni entry, scholarships, accommodation and more.

Phone (08) 6488 3428

Email sis@uwa.edu.au

Website uwa.edu.au/indigenous-students

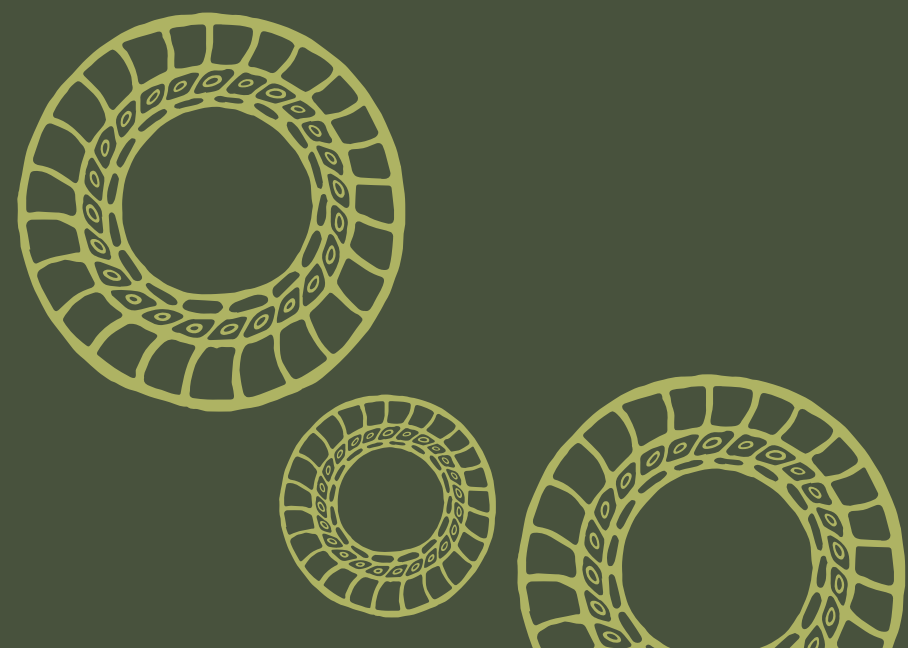
Bilya Marlee is the home of Indigenous students at UWA's Crawley Campus. Situated next to the Derbal Yerrigan (Swan River), the architecturally designed building was designed in collaboration with Noongar Elder Dr Richard Barry Walley OAM and reimagines a place of learning on Country.



CHOOSING YOUR ENTRY PATHWAY

There are plenty of pathways for Indigenous students to get into uni, whether you finished Year 12, completed WACE or have other valuable education and life experiences.

uwa.edu.au/indigenous-students



ENTRY TYPE	PATHWAY	FOR	HOW TO APPLY
DIRECT	ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank)	For WACE students who've graduated high school in the past two years with a final ATAR of 70 or above (or equivalent). Alternatively, you might be able to use your predicted ATAR from your Year 11 results for an early offer. This is the most direct pathway for school leavers starting undergraduate studies.	TISC via tisc.edu.au
	Indigenous Provisional Entry Scheme	For WACE students expecting an ATAR lower than the course entry requirement. You'll still need to achieve a reasonable ATAR that varies depending on the course.	UWA via uwa.edu.au/apply Search 'Indigenous Provisional Entry UWA'
	Experience-based entry	For non-WACE students (or those with a lower ATAR) with other life and education achievements. This is a great entry pathway for several undergraduate courses. Sporting, study, work and community experience all count towards entry. Use the 'eligibility checker' on UWA's website.	TISC via tisc.edu.au Search 'Experience-based entry UWA'
BRIDGING OR ENABLING COURSE	UWA Bilya Bidi – Indigenous Pathway Program (formerly the Aboriginal Orientation Course)	For those who have not completed Year 12, received the required ATAR or have other diverse life and education experiences. This free 14-week course grants entry into most undergraduate courses and is a great way to prepare yourself for uni study and to make friends before you start.	TISC via tisc.edu.au Search 'UWA Bilya Bidi – Indigenous Pathway'

MEET JOEL, TYSON AND TALEAH



Joel Ace Sanderson
Bachelor of Science (Psychology) (2022)

“Sometimes just seeing someone who’s walked the same road can be the spark that makes higher education feel possible.

The UWA School of Indigenous Studies has been a huge support throughout my studies. Being connected to other Aboriginal students who were on a similar path made a big difference – it created a sense of belonging and motivation. The opportunity to be involved in the on-campus community helped me stay grounded and connected culturally. I also really valued having access to tutors who supported my learning and helped me stay on track academically. Most importantly, I always knew I could reach out to the School if I had questions or needed guidance, they were always there to help.

Since graduating from UWA, my career has been shaped by a strong focus on both community impact and clinical development. I’ve worked in child protection and Aboriginal health strategy roles across WA, where I supported vulnerable families and contributed to mental health service planning. These roles deepened my understanding of systemic issues and strengthened my commitment to culturally responsive practice.”



Tyson McEwan
Juris Doctor (2022), Bachelor of Arts (2019) and Aboriginal Orientation Course (2015)

“From transitioning from the Orientation Course to my first degree, SIS was there every step of the way. I think it was the sense of community that SIS fostered at Shenton House and more recently at Bilya Marlee [that helped support me through uni]. UWA is a big campus with thousands of students and SIS is a big program, but it was small enough that you could wrap your arms around it because SIS became my community.

Other Indigenous students inspired me to continue my studies, seek further opportunities both professionally and personally and always give back to the student body. SIS made me believe [in myself] and I achieved many things at UWA and none bigger than completing the Juris Doctor after six years of studies. SIS supported me with applying for student accommodation at Uni Hall, offering the Orientation Course to kickstart my academic journey and general support to navigate through uni. I’ll never stop missing swinging by Gabe or Maz’s office [at SIS] for a yarn; I always felt like everything was going to be okay.

In my final year of the Juris Doctor, I accepted a graduate offer at Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer. The firm supported me with my practical legal training, which helped me become an admitted lawyer in Western Australia. I remain working at the firm as a solicitor in the corporate practice group.”



Taleah Ugle
Bachelor of Science (Anatomy, Human Biology & Indigenous Knowledge) (2025)

“The UWA campus in Albany allowed me to work full time and complete my bridging units before moving to Perth. I had also made connections with SIS through school camps, making a smoother transition when moving to Perth.

University wasn’t what I expected, purely because I didn’t expect the amount of extra-curricular opportunities that I would have participated in. I also thought it would be more difficult seeing as UWA is thought to be ‘elite’, but there has been so much support so I could excel.

To all the mob out there who are considering uni, I would say, ‘Take the leap!’. All of the hard things of doing something different, moving away from home and family ease as the support network here is ready to pick you up when things are difficult. You don’t want to wonder what could have been 10 years in the future.”



Indigenous students outside
Bilya Marlee. (2021)

SCHOLARSHIPS

There are many scholarships available for Indigenous students at UWA. Here are just a few on offer.

UWA CONNECT SCHOLARSHIP	COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIPS	ACADEMIC AND OTHER SCHOLARSHIPS
All commencing Indigenous undergraduate students are automatically eligible for this scholarship, worth \$5,000 per year (with an additional \$1,500 in the first year).	Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship, from \$3,000 per year Indigenous Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship, from \$5,000 per year Indigenous Commonwealth Achievement Scholarship, from \$3,000	Even more scholarships are available for academic achievement, specific degrees, accommodation and more. For more, visit uwa.edu.au/study/scholarships or reach out to our team at sis@uwa.edu.au

ABSTUDY

You might also be eligible for ABSTUDY. This program provides financial help for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students with living expenses, study costs and travel costs, if you're living away from home or travel as part of your study. You'll need to be enrolled in an approved course and be either studying full-time or have an approved concessional study load.

Bachelor of Biomedicine student Manny Richardson with Carly Aitchison from SIS Student Services. (2025)



ON-CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION

Living at UWA plays a vital role in your academic journey and uni experience. And it's a great way to make friends and save on travel.

Many students choose to live at our residential colleges, located across the road from our Crawley Campus, Perth. Here, you'll have your own room, daily meals provided and access to shared facilities.

A number of places are reserved just for Indigenous students at University Hall, St Catherine's and Trinity College. Many colleges also have Indigenous programs offering social events, tutoring and ongoing support.

Learn more at uwa.edu.au/live-on-campus

Fees and support

If you're eligible for ABSTUDY and are a regional student, your total UWA accommodation fees may be covered. We recommend applying as early as possible.

Have a yarn with our team about accommodation scholarships and support at **(08) 6488 3428** or sis@uwa.edu.au

UWA also has an accommodation concierge who can help you apply for college and even find temporary or crisis accommodation.

Email accommodation-concierge@uwa.edu.au



University Hall is just across the road from the Crawley campus.

“One of my favourite memories from my time at UWA and the School of Indigenous Studies was simply having a calm, welcoming space to study and recharge. It might sound small but knowing there was a place I could go where I felt culturally safe and supported made a big difference.

That quiet environment, where I could connect with others on the same path or just focus on my work, helped me feel grounded and reminded me I wasn’t doing this journey alone.”

Joel Ace Sanderson
Bachelor of Science (2022)



Davidson Canning (Juris Doctor) and Jason Hunter (Bachelor of Arts (Honours)) yarning with Indigenous Studies Lecturer Christian Miller-Sabbioni out the front of Bilya Marlee. (2025)

INDIGENOUS TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME (ITAS)

SIS has a tutoring program just for Indigenous students called ITAS. Once you’re enrolled in uni, our team can match you with a tutor to help with tutoring throughout your degree.

You can also head to weekly drop-in tutoring sessions at our home in Bilya Marlee.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

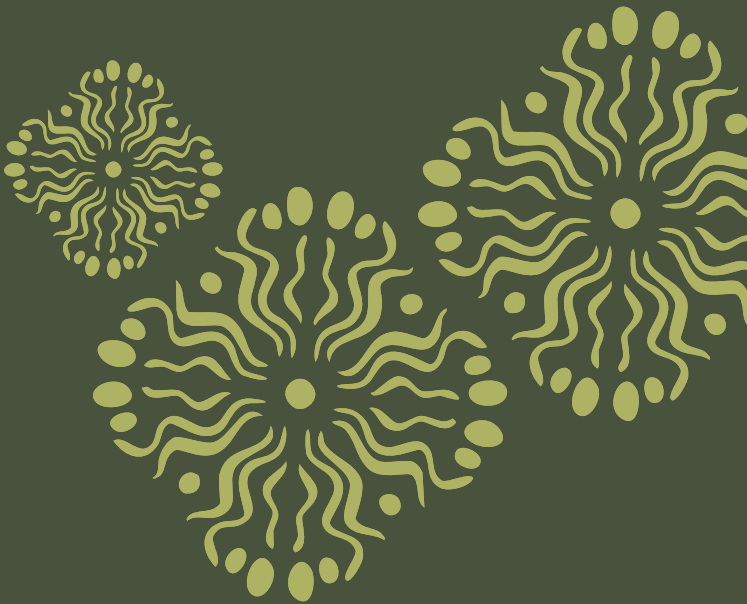
SUPPORT FROM SIS	THE LIVING ROOM	UNIACCESS
Our Student Services team is always on-hand if you need someone to yarn with about uni or just life in general. We can also connect you to other free uni services.	This is a drop-in service for any UWA students needing advice, support or just someone to talk to. You don’t need an appointment to visit, so drop by during their opening hours and have a chat with one of their peer supporters.	This free, confidential service supports students with a disability, illness or medical condition. They can help with access support, liaising with other faculties on your behalf, advice and more.



Indigenous Nationals is always one of our students' biggest highlights with mob from across the country congregating in a different city each year to play a whole lot of sport. (2025)

CAMPUS LIFE

Life at UWA puts you in the centre of the action. With friends to make and events to enjoy, you've got a built-in community here.



“It's all worth it at the end. The skills and memories you make are a part of a once in a lifetime experience. Make your ancestors proud!”

Rebeka Morrison
Bachelor of Arts (2025)



UWA student Rebeka (Bek) Morrison interned at the Berndt Museum through the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) unit, which enables students to develop professional skills and networks while gaining study credits. (2025)

OPPORTUNITIES

Indigenous students

Indigenous social events happen year-round at Bilya Marlee, including BBQs, quiz nights and study nights where you can catch up with other Indigenous students and staff.

Indigenous Nationals is a must on the sporting calendar, bringing mob from universities across the country to a different state each year.

National and international opportunities see many Indigenous students participate in industry conferences, workshops and study opportunities across Australia and globally.

Berndt Museum is an Indigenous-led institution housed at UWA that holds one of the most significant collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material in the world. You can learn about caring for collections by interning through UWA's Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program.

Indigenous cadetships are a great way to gain paid professional experience with businesses and institutions while studying. Cadets often work over summer or one day a week during semester. These are organised directly with the organisation, but SIS can assist with finding opportunities and supporting your application.

UWA

Campus life and events are a big part of the uni experience. There's always plenty happening on campus with regular events by the clubs, UWA Guild, Tavern and more.

UWA sport covers everything from football and netball to fencing and aikido with plenty of clubs to join.

UWA clubs feature almost every interest you could imagine with more than 150 clubs. Think film, politics, science, games, chess, culture, robotics and more.

Study abroad with overseas units and the student exchange program, where you can study internationally for up to a year.

Internships are available through UWA's Work Integrated Learning (WIL) units, which see you learn on-the-job and make valuable industry connections while getting course credit.

HOW DO I APPLY TO UNI?

1 Contact the School of Indigenous Studies (SIS)

Our Student Services team is here to help! We can answer questions – no matter how big or small – and support with choosing your course and entry pathway, enrolling in uni, finding accommodation, scholarships and more.

Reach out to us at **(08) 6488 3428** or **sis@uwa.edu.au**

2 Choose your degree

Visit **uwa.edu.au** and start researching. Watch videos of our students and alumni and get a sense if this could be the degree for you. There are also opportunities to transfer across degrees, if you change your mind later.

3 Check the entry requirements

Once you’ve chosen, check the ATAR needed or any other course requirements.

4 Choose your entry pathway

You can either enter ‘direct’ (going straight into your undergraduate degree with the required ATAR or relevant life/education experience) or you can take an enabling or bridging course, like the UWA Bilya Bidi – Indigenous Pathway Program. Visit page 8 to see which pathway might work for you.

If you’re thinking of applying for uni, reach out to our Indigenous Student Services team and we’ll support you through the process.

5 Prep your supporting documents

You’ll need:

- Proof of identification (such as a birth certificate)
- Unique Student Identifier or USI – all Australian school students have one. If you don’t have a record of yours, search ‘find your USI’
- CV/resume and references (only if applying for Experience-based entry)

Other material you might need:

- Tax File Number (if applying for HECS)

6 Apply online

For ATAR, Experience-based entry and enabling courses: **tisc.edu.au**

For the Indigenous Provisional Entry Scheme: **uwa.edu.au/apply**

7 Getting your offer

You’ll get the outcome of your offer via email. If successful, login to the UWA portal to accept it!

If you didn’t get an offer, there might be an alternative pathway for uni entry. Reach out to our team – we may be able to help.

“UWA is a big campus with thousands of students, and the School of Indigenous Studies is a big program, but it was small enough that you could wrap your arms around it ... SIS became my community.”

Tyson McEwan

Juris Doctor (2022), Bachelor of Arts (2019)
and Aboriginal Orientation Course (2015)

Get in touch

CALL US

(08) 6488 3428

EMAIL US

sis@uwa.edu.au



WEBSITE

uwa.edu.au/indigenous-students

VISIT US

Bilya Marlee | UWA School of Indigenous Studies
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Stay connected



@uwaindigenoustudies



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