The Constitution

of the

Indigenous Graduate Student Association
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PREAMBLE

The Indigenous Graduate Student Association (IGSA) recognises the people of the Kulin Nations as the traditional owners and sovereign custodians of the land on which the majority of the University of Melbourne campuses are located. The IGSA pays respect to Elders past and present. The IGSA also recognises the important contribution that Indigenous people make to the academic and cultural life of the university.

Over the previous decade, the University of Melbourne increased the number of Indigenous students entering into post-graduate studies (coursework and research). As a result, Indigenous post-graduate students realised a gap of representation at a graduate level. The support of universities services, such as Murrup Barak Institute of Indigenous Development and Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development, allowed for formation of a student led representative body.

Thus, the Indigenous Graduate Student Association (IGSA) was established.

DEFINITIONS

Group refers to the Graduate Student Group.

GSA means the University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association Incorporated.

An academic day is a working day on which teaching occurs during first or second semester of the University’s academic year that is not a Saturday, Sunday or University holiday.

Academic year means the period commencing on and including the Monday falling on or closest to the first day of March of each calendar year and concluding at the end of the annual examination period.
NAME

The name of the Group shall be the Indigenous Graduate Student Association (IGSA).

AFFILIATION

When the Indigenous Graduate Student Association is affiliated to GSA anything contained in this constitution that conflicts with the Constitution of GSA or with any regulations shall be null and void. In all matters not specifically provided for herein, the Constitution of GSA and any regulations shall apply.

The Graduate Group may choose to re-affiliate or affiliate from time-to-time by special resolution.

AIMS

The aims of IGSA are to:

a. foster communication of research ideas and collaboration between all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate students, and non-Indigenous graduate students who have an interest in research and practice relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;

b. encourage and support non-Indigenous researchers to undertake Indigenous related research agendas;

c. engage and support undergraduate students and other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who are interested in undertaking post-graduate study;

d. provide academic and professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate students
through social, cultural and academic events which promote networking;

e. host and promote academic and social events which contribute to the strengthening of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate community; and

f. advocate on behalf of and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate and graduate students in their engagement with the university.

MEMBERSHIP

There must be a minimum of six University of Melbourne graduate student members to constitute the Indigenous Student Graduate Association.

Membership shall be open to:

a. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate students (including Honours coursework and research program), as verified by Murrup Barak and Wilin Centre; and,

b. Other graduate students of the University of Melbourne who have an interest in research and practice relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

To maintain affiliation with GSA, the Group’s membership must be composed of a minimum of 75% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduate students from the University of Melbourne.

A person who identifies as a non-Indigenous graduate student can be considered a member on having completed a membership form as prepared by the committee. The application process shall entail:

i. At the next available IGSA meeting, any non-Indigenous membership forms will be discussed and accepted if approved by three IGSA committee members;

ii. Non-Indigenous applicants will be informed of the outcome
of their application in reasonable time if approved or denied at the previous IGSA meeting.

COMMITTEE AND MEETINGS

The committee shall have the following members:

a. An executive consisting of:
   i. The Co-Chairs for Research, and for Coursework, who shall be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduate students, and are the representatives of the Indigenous Graduate Student Association who shall liaise with GSA;
   ii. The Secretary, who shall be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduate student, is responsible for maintaining a current membership list, constitution and minutes of any meetings held for the Indigenous Graduate Student Association; and
   iii. The Treasurer, who shall be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduate student, is responsible for maintaining the financial records of the Indigenous Graduate Student Association.

b. Non-executive members consisting of three general representatives as defined by section 4 of the constitution ‘membership’.

c. A Chairperson shall be appointed for all meetings.

d. The committee shall meet at least twice a semester and have the following powers:
   i. Control over the finances of group; and
   ii. Control over the activities of the group.

e. A committee meeting may be called by any member of the committee, with a minimum of five (5) days notice.

f. The committee is at all times bound by the decisions of a Group general meeting. Any committee decision may be overturned by an Indigenous Graduate Student Association general meeting.

g. The quorum for meetings shall be:
   i. At a committee meeting, three committee members of which at least one must be an executive member;
ii. At the Annual General Meeting, ten members, including at least seven University of Melbourne Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduate students;

iii. At a general meeting, ten members or one-third of the group, whichever is the lesser, including at least two-thirds Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander graduate students;

iv. The committee shall be required to give five academic days’ notice of a general meeting or Annual General Meeting.

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ELECTIONS AND VOTING

An annual election shall be held at the annual general meeting.

v. Casual vacancies may come up from time-to-time and these positions are to be either kept vacant or elected by the committee members by simple majority before being replaced at the annual general meeting.

vi. Proxy.

vii. A committee may conduct elections for positions online but only if this is agreed upon by special resolution.

viii. Voting will be conducted democratically. A simple majority of member’s present will see any motion passed. All tied motions are lost.

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SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS

a. Special resolutions may be used by the committee in order to undertake the following changes:

   (i) Affiliate, disaffiliate or re-affiliate;
   (ii) Constitutional amendments or changes;
   (iii) Elections.

b. Other motions that the committee has agreed to send to special resolution by simple majority voting.

c. The procedure for a special resolution is that the committee must agree to it by simple majority voting.

d. The special resolution can then be sent to all members, with at least 5
academic days’ notice between sending the special resolution and a vote taken on the resolution.

e. Voting will take place on the special resolution according to the elections and voting procedure above, save that an online voting method may be used.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

There shall be one Annual General Meeting every calendar year, which shall be held during term time in either first or second semester. Five academic days’ notice must be given. At this meeting:

a. Reports shall be presented by the Chair, Treasurer and any other reports that are deemed necessary.

b. Full financial reports shall be presented and adopted. They will report on finances from the previous AGM to the present AGM.

c. Elections will be held for a new committee, with the new committee to take charge of the Group once the elections have concluded. The term of office for a committee will be from the AGM at the time of their election to the following AGM.

d. Other motions on notice may be discussed and voted upon.

e. General business may discuss motions that are not on notice and vote on them.

f. Special General Meetings

i. The committee may call general meetings as it sees fit or if they are petitioned. The form and procedure of general meetings will be consistent with the Annual General Meeting except that committee elections will not be held unless notice is given specifically calling for them.

ii. If one-third of the membership should petition the committee for a general meeting, such meeting must take place within twenty academic days. Five academic days’ notice must be given.
CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION

a. Constitutional changes require a simple majority of members present voting at a Special General Meeting, Annual General Meeting, or by Special Resolution. Any changes can take effect from the conclusion of the meeting or voting.

b. Constitutional motions must be presented in writing to the committee at least ten academic days before the meeting and notice of these should be sent by mail to the membership five academic days before the general meeting to change them.

ABSENCE FROM MEETINGS

a. Any committee member absent from two consecutive committee meetings without apology or due cause may, at the committee’s discretion, be deemed to have resigned their position.

IMPEACHMENT

a. If it is deemed that a committee member should be stood down, by a motion of the committee, or a petition bearing the names of at least two-third of members, impeachment proceedings will take place against the nominated committee member.

b. At a Special General Meeting or Annual General Meeting, or via special resolution, a motion shall be put to impeach the committee member, provided that at least five academic days notice has been given to the membership and to the member concerned in writing.

c. If this passed by a two thirds majority, that committee position will become vacant and a new election held immediately.

d. The committee member to be impeached will be given at least five minutes to speak or a statement can be sent before the vote is taken.

DISCIPLINE

a. A Graduate Group may take disciplinary action against a member if it is determined that the member has failed to comply with the rules of this
Constitution; or refuses to support the aims of the Group; or has engaged in conduct prejudicial to the Group.

b. Disciplinary action may be taken on the terms above if it is deemed by a motion of the committee, or a petition bearing the names of at least two-thirds of members, any member of the group can be expelled.

c. The Committee must appoint a disciplinary subcommittee to hear the matter and determine what action, if any, to take against the member.

d. The members of the disciplinary subcommittee may be Committee members, members of the Association or anyone else; but must not be biased against, or in favour of, the member concerned.

e. The subcommittee must give the member an opportunity to be heard; and consider any written statement submitted by the member. The disciplinary subcommittee may take no further action against the member; or reprimand the member; or suspend the membership rights of the member for a specified period; or expel the member from the Group.

f. The suspension of membership rights or the expulsion of a member by the disciplinary subcommittee under this rule takes effect immediately after the vote is passed.

g. A person whose membership rights have been suspended or who has been expelled from the Group may give notice to the effect that he or she wishes to appeal against the suspension or expulsion. The notice must be in writing and given to the disciplinary subcommittee immediately after the vote to suspend or expel the person is taken; or to the Secretary not later than 48 hours after the vote.

h. A disciplinary appeal meeting must be convened in not less than 21 days and all members entitled to vote must be notified about the meeting.

i. At the meeting the committee must state the grounds for expelling the member and the reasons for taking action. The member whose membership has been suspended or who has been expelled must be given an opportunity to be heard.

j. Following this, the members entitled must vote by secret ballot.

k. The decision of the discipline committee will be upheld if not less than three quarters of the members voting at the meeting vote in favour of the decision.
DISPUTES

a. Any disputes must be resolved internally by the Group, and an informal resolution should be sought, save where there are serious allegations that should be referred to the appropriate authorities.

b. The procedure for handling disputes is separate from discipline, and any member subject to a discipline committee must not pursue a dispute until the conclusion of the discipline process.

c. If an informal resolution is not reached within 14 days of the parties becoming aware of dispute, the parties must notify the committee of the dispute, agree to or request the appointment of a mediator, and attempt in good faith to settle the dispute by mediation.

d. Disputes may arise that involve:
   iii. a member and another member;
   iv. a member and the Committee;
   v. a member and the Group.

e. The mediator must be a person chosen by agreement between the parties; or in the absence of agreement—
   i. if the dispute is between a member and another member—a person appointed by the Committee; or
   ii. if the dispute is between a member and the Committee or the Association—a person appointed or employed by the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria.

f. A mediator appointed by the Committee may be a member or former member of the Association but in any case must not be a person who has a personal interest in the dispute; or is biased in favour of or against any party.

g. The mediator to the dispute, in conducting the mediation, must give each party every opportunity to be heard; and allow due consideration by all parties of any written statement submitted by any party; and ensure that natural justice is accorded to the parties throughout the mediation process.

h. The mediator must not determine the dispute and must keep the dispute confidential.

i. If the mediation process does not resolve the dispute, the parties may seek
to resolve the dispute at law.

WINDING UP

A motion to wind up the Indigenous Graduate Student Association must be written and notice of the motion is to be given in the agenda for the General Meeting at which the winding up motion is to be decided. A winding up motion is carried by a simple majority.

In the event of the Group being dissolved, the amount that remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall be transferred to any association with similar purposes which is not carried on for the profit or gain of its individual members.

NON-PROFIT CLAUSE

The profits (if any) or other income and property of the club must be applied solely towards the promotion of the aims of the club as set out in this Constitution and no portion of it may be distributed, directly or indirectly, to any member of the group whether by way of dividend, bonus or other profits. This does not prevent any payment in good faith by the group for the payment or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses incurred by a member of the group on behalf of the group.

– END OF IGSA CONSTITUTION –