



Image: words of staff, students and community members from Diversity Week Breakfast 2017 on what, 'Diversity and Inclusion' means to them.



## DESIGNING INCLUSIVE EVENTS AT USC

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2019

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## ABOUT THESE GUIDELINES

USC is proud of the diversity that exists among our students, our staff and our community. As such, being inclusive and celebrating diversity should be a central consideration when organising and participating in all events.

## GETTING STARTED

One of the easiest ways to ensure your event is inclusive is to engage people from your intended audience/s in the planning.

Consult relevant areas of the University such as Access & Diversity, Human Resources, Indigenous Services, Marketing and External Engagement, the Student Representative Council or Student Guild, Student Events and Communications and Asset Management Services where appropriate.

Your event should create opportunities for all members of the USC community to share in significant events. It's likely that you're already doing many of the things outlined; however, there is always opportunity for improvement and you can take your event to the next level by following these guidelines for inclusive practice.

## WELCOME TO COUNTRY AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

While the traditional practices of acknowledging the Traditional Custodians and seeking permission to enter or use resources from the land and sea have always been in place in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, this practice is only starting to emerge as a growing convention in modern Australian society.

Cultural practice is to acknowledge traditional custodianship of the land at the commencement of functions, meetings and presentations of government departments and various organisations. This acknowledgement pays respect to the traditional custodians, ancestors and continuing cultural, spiritual and religious practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Further, it provides an increasing awareness and recognition of Australia's Indigenous peoples and cultures.

### Welcome to Country

Welcome to Country gives custodians the opportunity to formally welcome people to their land. The Welcome to Country ceremony should, where possible, be undertaken by Elders, by a locally recognised Aboriginal community spokesperson or, by a locally recognised cultural service provider; for example, Aboriginal Medical Service or Aboriginal Land Council.

There is no exact wording when conducting Welcome to Country. The content of the ceremony should be negotiated between the agency and the provider with reference to the nature of the event and the community practices. Generally, the provider will offer participants local Aboriginal history and cultural information and will go on to welcome delegates/participants to the country/land.

When organising a Welcome to Country ceremony, it is important to consider the following factors:

- the Elder or community member is provided with information regarding the audience they are welcoming
- the equipment the Elder or community member is required to use if applicable, for example, a microphone and being on a stage
- offering transport where necessary

### Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Acknowledgment of Country is a way that people (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander not from the local area or non-indigenous) can show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and the ongoing relationship of traditional owners with the land.

A Chair or Speaker begins the meeting by acknowledging that the meeting is taking place in the Country of Traditional Owners. On occasion, there may be disputes about who the Traditional Owners are. Those who acknowledge the country, can 'acknowledge all the traditional owners of the land' or can 'acknowledge the traditional owners of this land' without naming those people. Acknowledging Country in this way will not cause offence where there is some potential or actual dispute around ownership.

Example of an Acknowledgement to Country statement:

- I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. I pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.
- I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the [insert local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island Nation]. I pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

### Smoking ceremony

Smoking ceremonies are conducted by Aboriginal people with specialised cultural knowledge. The ceremony aims to cleanse the space in which the ceremony takes place. Given the significant nature of the ceremony, smoking ceremonies are usually only performed at major events.

### Service fee

In providing cultural services such as Welcome to Country, artistic performances and ceremonies Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. As such, providers of these services should be appropriately remunerated. Appropriate remuneration and / or assistance should be negotiated between the cultural service provider and the agency, considering:

- travel to and from the event
- public profile of the event

For further information, please contact: [Indigenous Services](#)

Email: [indigenous@usc.edu.au](mailto:indigenous@usc.edu.au)

### CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

As a diverse community, we should make space for everyone to share the religious observances and cultural celebrations that are not traditionally recognised or celebrated with public holidays and/or provide space for individual observances.

At USC, diversity includes people from a range of backgrounds and identities and is not limited to those with physical disabilities. Not all disabilities are visible, and by creating an inclusive event we reduce the impact of any functional impairment and open the experience up to a wider range of people.

As the lead on organising events it is important to consider your role in improving gender and diversity balance. Here are some useful checklist items to consider:

- Strive to achieve 50:50 gender balance and a diverse range of speakers and panel members. Force the question – if we don't have a diverse balance, why not?
- Distribute topics so that women's voices are heard on "hard" topics, not just "soft" topics.
- Ensure speaker criteria are not inadvertently biased, eg: in Australia limiting panel participation to University Executive, CEOs or Ministers leaves you with very few women.
- Book speakers early – in case you need to change your approach to ensure diversity and gender balance.
- Ask around. Diverse speakers can be found, eg: ask other panelists, industry insiders, or Google. Look at past conferences, government boards and industry associations.

### CHOOSING A DATE AND TIME FOR YOUR EVENT

Check your proposed date doesn't conflict with important religious and cultural celebrations or observances (eg: Fridays can be problematic for some religions, and during Ramadan Muslim staff and students may be fasting).

Be mindful that part-time workers and people with carer responsibilities may be limited to events held at times when they are on campus or when child/elder care is most likely to be available and affordable. For example, breakfast events or evening events can create difficulty for carers.

It's also important to fit with the academic calendar and existing USC events or peak times for staff, students and community (eg: Orientation week, exam week, Open Day,

university holidays). If you're unsure, contact [studentevents@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentevents@usc.edu.au) and [events@usc.edu.au](mailto:events@usc.edu.au) to find out if there is a conflict with the date and time of the event you are planning.

The University will often have site works scheduled which would need to be considered as part of your event planning. These checks are completed as part of the [event request process](#).

Organising a range of events throughout the year which reflect the diversity of the USC community will give all participants the opportunity to share their cultural and religious observances and feel included. It's also a chance for all of us to learn more about other cultures.

#### **Further USC resources:**

- [USC's Celebrating Spiritual and Cultural Diversity Calendar \(.PDF\)](#)

The purpose of this online calendar is to celebrate and raise awareness and understanding of significant events for people who may identify with different diversity groups. Developing an effective diversity and inclusion culture is an important part of being a world-leading university. Diversity adds value to our problem solving, decision making and creativity. Inclusion fosters collaboration, trust and respect and supports psycho-social safety and well-being.

#### **Further external resources:**

- [Australian Government Calendar of Cultural and Religious dates](#)

### **CHOOSING A LOCATION**

When planning your event and choosing the location, make sure your venue is fully accessible by considering the following:

- Does the venue provide safe and easy access for mobility scooters/wheelchairs/strollers?
- Are pathways to the venue accessible? Even, flat and wide surfaces are preferable. Venues that are near mobility parking areas; and where access includes both ramps or lifts, tactile signage and automatic doors are also recommended.
- Seating – is there flexibility to alter seating arrangements to include people using wheelchairs, strollers; comfortable seating for periods of extended sitting?
- Temperature, ventilation and sun protection can enhance or detract from an event so consider these factors in your venue selection.

- Are there accessible restrooms/parent rooms/gender neutral toilets? These would preferably be located on the same level as the function and clearly signposted.
- Is there enough lighting and is signage clear? Large, legible print with good lighting along pathways is important to help visitors to the location.
- Is the layout of furniture suitable for people with mobility issues and strollers to move around freely?
- What contingencies and risk management plans have you made regarding weather, emergencies and other unexpected issues?

For events where there are speakers or presentations, check the visual aids are clear and determine what resources may be required and identified on the RSVP, eg: sign language interpreters, hearing loops, live captioning for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Check that the presenter/s can access any podiums or platforms and technology within the venue. Consider using a microphone or having the speaker repeat audience questions and ensure the seating layout enables clear sight of the presenter. All videos should be captioned, and all written content should be read aloud.

Providing information on transportation options to the relevant campus including links to public transport, drop-off points and parking is important. Sending campus maps and/or floor plans before the event to assist participants to find the venue, including access to mobility parking, helps visitors to plan their journey smoothly.

There are guidelines for how campus facilities can be used for events including serving alcohol, non-smoking policy, safety and security and use of venues.

- [USC facilities and events services – for venue hire, catering and booking](#)
- [USC smoke free policy](#)
- [USC parking](#)
- [USC campus locations and maps](#)
- [Event safety](#)
- [Captioning](#)

## ENTERTAINMENT

If you're providing entertainment, ensure it is appropriate for your guests, and consider the location and allowable noise levels.

Where possible, entertainment should be family-friendly. However, if content is explicit or may be offensive to any members of audience eg: nudity in plays or dance recitals, content of comedy or dramatic performances that may cause offence, graphic content not suitable for all ages, it is necessary to forewarn participants.

For example:

*WARNING: The following presentation contains coarse language and nudity; viewer discretion is recommended.*

*WARNING: Viewers are advised the following presentation contains graphic content of medical procedures.*

*WARNING: Viewers are advised the performance includes dramatized violence and coarse language.*

If you're planning to show photos/videos that contains images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the protocol is to include a warning. For example:

*WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are warned that this presentation/these videos may contain images and voices of deceased people.*

If an event includes strobe lighting or smoke machines, then warning audiences ahead of time is recommended. Strobe lighting can be uncomfortable for some people and may trigger seizures, and smoke machines or smoking may cause difficulties for people with lung conditions or asthma. Smoke machines can also trigger University smoke alarms so please consult with your venue booking team.

For participants with hearing or visual impairments, high noise levels or poor lighting may make it difficult to participate, and for those with assistance animals, noise may affect the animal's ability to provide support within the venue. It is illegal to prevent a certified assistance animal from entering any venue (with some exceptions around health and safety). Seek advice from AccessAbility Service at [AccessAbility@usc.edu.au](mailto:AccessAbility@usc.edu.au) if you're unsure of how to plan for this.

#### **Further resources:**

- [USC facilities and events services – for venue hire, catering and booking](#)
- [AccessAbility Services](#)
- [Australian Classifications for Publications, Television and Computer Games](#)
- [Live Performance Australia: Content Ratings and Warnings](#)
- [Support animals for people with disabilities](#)

#### **FOOD**

Consider the following guidelines when providing food at your event:

- If food is placed on tables for guests to help themselves, label all food with place cards (eg: 'pork-free', 'beef-free', 'vegetarian', 'vegan', 'may contain alcohol', 'gluten free', 'dairy free', 'may contains nuts' etc.)
- If you intend to serve meat, consider your intended audience. There are a number of religions where meat must be prepared and served appropriately (eg: Judaism, Islam, and Sikhism) and some additional limitations around fish, dairy and eggs. Make sure you provide options for people to indicate preferences and work with caterers to manage menus appropriately.
- Serving vegetarian and vegan food will cater for people from most religious and cultural backgrounds. Ensure separation of meat dishes from vegetarian and vegan



foods and clearly mark if meat dishes are halal or not. This includes separate plates, utensils and, where possible, placing food on a separate table.

- Food allergies can be serious or fatal so consider if you need to exclude known allergens such as nuts, shell fish or egg protein. If you provide these, ensure they are labelled accordingly.
- Provide lactose-free, gluten-free and diabetic-friendly options (these can often be the vegan options too).
- Ensure caterers are available to contact to advise guests who have questions about the ingredients on offer.
- Serve food such as fresh fruit and vegetables, foods that are low in fat, gluten-free and dairy-free.

Most catering companies should be able to provide menu options for all participants, but make sure you give them enough notice to make appropriate arrangements. Research the options on-line and work closely with your caterer when planning the menu.

The University has a strict policy on the serving and consumption of alcohol on campus. You need to know and comply with the requirements outlined in this policy before planning an event where alcohol will be served.

Again, for both religious and personal reasons people may choose not to attend functions where alcohol is served. Include non-alcoholic drinks and water. To ensure the comfort and inclusion of all guests, include flexibility or options for tables at differing heights, tables to rest plates or drinks on, room to negotiate tables and furniture and options to sit down.

#### **Further Resources:**

- [Information on vegan/vegetarian food](#)
- [Information on halal food](#)
- [Information on kosher food](#)
- [Queensland Faith Community Council Food Guide](#)
- Consumption of [alcohol](#) at USC

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Contact information and an RSVP is vital. This allows guests to indicate their accessibility needs, dietary requirements, or to get more information in advance and helps organisers to plan for supports such as sign language interpreters, captioning, print materials in accessible formats, dietary requirements, parking and planning venue layout.

Sign language interpreters are in high demand so should be booked early. USC's AccessAbility Service can assist in sourcing interpreters and live captioning and guiding you on arrangements for the day. The event organiser is responsible for the costs. Please contact the AccessAbility Service at [AccessAbility@usc.edu.au](mailto:AccessAbility@usc.edu.au)

If you are showing videos that require captioning, please ensure they have been captioned appropriately. Some useful resources about captioning can be found at

[www.mediaaccess.org.au/about/captioning-audio-description-and-transcription-suppliers](http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/about/captioning-audio-description-and-transcription-suppliers)

Ensure your documents for promoting the event and any materials at the event are accessible [webaim.org](http://webaim.org)

Please contact the web accessibility specialist at [webaccessibility@usc.edu.au](mailto:webaccessibility@usc.edu.au) for further assistance and/or refer to [my.usc.edu.au/teaching/web-accessibility](http://my.usc.edu.au/teaching/web-accessibility).

## PROMOTION

Be inclusive in the promotion of your event. For instance, not everyone would be attracted to an event focused on alcohol consumption, and BBQs are not everyone's preference. Where possible offer a range of attractions or allow for flexibility in participation.

Think creatively about your event and consider:

- Who your audience is
- What is the outcome of your event eg: building a sense of belonging for students, community engagement, building aspirations.
- What communication channels are going to have the most impact and to which audiences. For example, staff and students; different ages of audiences; and internal and external stakeholders may respond to different modes of communication eg: email, website, posters, social media.
- Include messaging around the diversity of speakers and panel members
  - Student Events – contact USC Student Communications for templates and/or assistance in developing a communications plan [studentevents@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentevents@usc.edu.au)
  - Community Events – contact USC Events for templates and/or assistance in developing a communication plan [events@usc.edu.au](mailto:events@usc.edu.au)
- Is your marketing accessible? Ensure all online material (including marketing material, RSVP forms, or websites) is accessible and compliant with the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* (see [australia.gov.au/accessibility](http://australia.gov.au/accessibility)). USC students and staff can also contact our web accessibility specialist at [webaccessibility@usc.edu.au](mailto:webaccessibility@usc.edu.au) for further information.
- What signs, images and language will you use to emphasis USC's diverse community and acknowledge alternate histories, events and cultural elements.
- What dietary options do you need to consider? Advertise that non-alcoholic drinks will be available and that a range of dietary requirements will be catered for.
- How can people find out about your event? If they need more information who do they talk to? Provide an option to RSVP, telephone, or e-mail contact to include an option for

dietary and access requirements (eg: sign language interpreters, captioning, mobility needs etc.). Consent for the use of images is also recommended (see [Appendix 1](#) for sample RSVP)

## CONTACT US

We welcome feedback on this document to continuously improve the way events are delivered.

Unit: Access and Diversity

Email: [diversity@usc.edu.au](mailto:diversity@usc.edu.au)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Equity colleagues at Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology for their collegiality and sharing of resources to assist in the development of this guide.

- Celebrating Diversity: Diversity and inclusiveness at events: good practice guidelines (QUT)
- Celebrating Diversity: Designing inclusive events at Griffith University

## REFERENCES

- Dietary Dilemmas: A Handbook for Food Providers on Catering for Alternative Diets (UniSA)
- Gender Balance at Every Forum: The Panel Pledge

## GUIDELINE APPROVALS

Guidelines Owner(s):	Manager, Access and Diversity
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## APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE RSVP

Survey Monkey or Google Forms are accessible with Survey Monkey being more accessible for screen-reading software.

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Pronouns

- she/her/hers
- he/him/his
- they/them/theirs
- free format field for other

Student/Staff number (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

- Yes, I will be attending
- No, I cannot attend

Dietary Requirements

- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Halal
- Kosher
- Gluten free
- Dairy free
- Diabetic
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please note USC Kitchens are not certified allergen free*

Access Requirements

- Auslan interpreters
- Captioning
- Wheelchair access
- Assistance Animal
- Other \_\_\_\_\_