



Open doors to research and opportunity in science



ABORIGINAL and Torres Strait Islander students are finding more ways to explore their curiosity for science at the University of Melbourne – with pathways, programs and internships to support their learning and future careers.

For Bachelor of Science (Extended) student Tiarna Kinces, those opportunities have already had a big impact.

"I chose to study at the University of Melbourne because of the flexibility and breadth of its courses," Tiarna said. "I first heard about the Bachelor of Science (Extended) from a high school careers adviser and it felt like the right pathway for me."

That pathway gave Tiarna the freedom to explore and ultimately find her passion. She began with an interest in engineering but soon realised psychology was where her curiosity lay. The Bachelor of Science (Extended), which lets students experience 28 subjects before committing to a specialisation, helped Tiarna find her stride while also introducing her to subjects she calls remarkable, including Geology of Southeast Australia and Australian Wildlife Biology.

Tiarna is now majoring in psychology

and recently completed a four-week research internship through the Faculty of Science's Indigenous Students in Science Research Internship (ISSRI) program. The program places undergraduate students in research labs across the University, allowing them to step into the role of a researcher. At the end of the program, students present their projects – developing both research and communication skills.

Ellen Tunumafono, Senior Coordinator of Indigenous STEM Outreach in the Faculty of Science, said ISSRI was created to help students see research as a real pathway.

"The program is important for students who may not have had access seeing what research can look like. It also helps widen participation by increasing the number of future First Nations researchers at the University of Melbourne," she said.

Her team supports students with a range of enrichment activities throughout the program, including coffee catch-ups, dinners with Indigenous academics, practice presentation sessions and bespoke support.

"Many students finish ISSRI more interested in research and more confident to pursue it," Ellen said.

For Tiarna, ISSRI meant joining the Functions of Emotion in Everyday Life (FEEL) lab, where she investigated the relationship between rumination, social sharing and emotional goals.

"My project explored whether the way we think about our feelings influences how we share them with others," she explained. "I conducted a literature review and designed a framework for future studies."

The experience has already shaped her next steps. "The internship was instrumental in helping me decide my future direction," Tiarna said. "I now plan to continue into Honours and other graduate programs after finishing my degree."

For many students, the Bachelor of Science (Extended) provides an important transition into university life. Unlike the Bachelor of Science, the first year offers smaller classes, mentoring and extra support before students join the larger cohort.

"Science is about curiosity, discovery and limitless possibilities," Tiarna said.

"Looking back, I'm incredibly grateful for the experiences and opportunities I've had at the University of Melbourne. Each one has opened new doors and helped shape my path."



Bachelor of Science (Extended) student, Tiarna Kinces.

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