

NSW Department of Education 21st Annual Nanga Mai Awards

NOMINATION GUIDELINES

Now is the time to nominate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff, non-Aboriginal staff, Aboriginal community members and NSW public schools for a NSW Department of Education Nanga Mai award.

These guidelines will answer your questions about the nomination process, eligibility, and selection criteria for a Nanga Mai award.

What are the NSW Department of Education Nanga Mai Awards?

The NSW Department of Education Nanga Mai Awards are held to celebrate and recognise excellence and educational achievements in Aboriginal education in New South Wales public schools. These awards provide an opportunity for staff, families and communities to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding achievements in Aboriginal education.

Award winners will be recognised in a special award ceremony in Term 4, 2026, highlighting all the outstanding achievements in Aboriginal education. Further details regarding the ceremony will be published via the department's Nanga Mai website as they become available. The NSW Department of Education [21st Nanga Mai Awards](#) ceremony will be held on **Wednesday 4th November 2026**, at the Department of Education Parramatta Office.

Who can be nominated?

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff; non-Aboriginal staff; Aboriginal community members; and NSW public schools.

An explanation of the award categories is provided later in this document. Please read and understand the award criteria prior to your nomination.

Who can nominate for an award?

Anyone employed by the NSW Department of Education is eligible to submit a nomination for an award. Before starting the online nomination, you will be required to confirm that you are a departmental employee.

Can I nominate a candidate for more than one award?

Candidates can be nominated for more than one award, but nominators must submit a new form for each category.

When do nominations open and close?

Nominations open **Monday 1st June 2026** and close **Wednesday 29th July 2026**.

How do you prepare a nomination?

The nomination must provide comprehensive information about the nominee's achievements and how they have gone above and beyond to achieve excellence. It should include relevant examples of how the nominee's accomplishments have been outstanding. The nomination must be written in a format suitable for publication, with correct grammar and punctuation, and be no longer than 200 words.

You must complete the online form to submit your nomination. The form is easy to access and understand.

Before you begin, please gather the following key information:

- **Details of the person you are nominating:** full name, age and year group.
- **A nomination statement of up to 200 words** explaining why you are nominating the individual, including the areas in which they have excelled. The statement must be written in a format suitable for publication in the Nanga Mai Awards program, should the nominee be successful.
- **A photo of the nominee.** Students must be in their school uniform, such as their official school photo. The photo must be of high quality and suitable for publication in the Nanga Mai Awards program, should the nominee be successful. By submitting the photo through this nomination process, you confirm that parental and/or caregiver consent has been obtained for the use of this photo. Please ensure the photo file is labeled using the student's first and last name (e.g., Jane Smith).
- **Endorsement from the principal and acknowledgement from the local or regional AECG representative** prior to nominating. Please note: if your area does not have an [AECG](#) executive representative, contact the state secretariat ph: 02 9550 5666 or email: [Contact Us — NSW AECG Inc.](#)
- **Tips for how to write a strong nomination**

Write a draft first: Use Word or a similar program to draft your nomination. This lets you carefully check spelling, grammar, and keep your word count within the 200-word limit (check the bottom left corner of Word for the count).

Start strong: Begin with a clear and compelling sentence in plain English explaining why you're nominating the individual. Avoid overly complicated or wordy language—get straight to the point and make your statement stand out.

Use bullet points to highlight achievements: List specific, high-quality examples of how the nominee has excelled. Be clear, concise, and impactful.

Mention other recognition: If the nominee has received previous awards or recognition, include that information.

Avoid overusing EduChat, ChatGPT or similar tools: While AI tools can help you brainstorm or polish your writing, the most effective nominations come from your personal knowledge and genuine voice.

Authenticity and personal insight will always stand out.

Who selects the award winners?

Nominations are presented to regional and state panels for consideration. Awards will be presented to outstanding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff; non-Aboriginal staff; Aboriginal community members; and NSW public schools.

Regional panel members consist of: Senior Education Officer 2 (SEO2); principal representative; Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer; Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group (AECG) representative (local/regional).

State panel members consist of representatives from: Aboriginal Education and Communities Directorate; Primary Principals Association; Secondary Principals Council; NSW AECG (State); Aboriginal Education Council; Parents & Citizens and NSW Teachers Federation.

How are successful recipients notified of their award?

Recipients of student and staff awards will be notified via email to the principal prior to the ceremony. Recipients of school and community awards will be notified directly via email prior to the ceremony.

Relevant information to support the organisation of the award ceremony will be communicated and requested at this time.

How is the outcome notified if the nominee is unsuccessful?

If the nominee is not selected as an award winner, nominators and/or principals will be notified of the outcome of nominations **after the award ceremony** and official publications.

More information or help

If you have any other questions or queries regarding Nanga Mai awards, please contact the Nanga Mai awards coordination team at nangamai@det.nsw.edu.au.

STUDENT AWARDS

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students who are currently a student in NSW public schools are eligible to be nominated for one (or more) of the following awards:

Outstanding All Round Student (primary and secondary award winners)

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student who has demonstrated outstanding commitment and excellence across a range of activities, including attendance, leadership, academic commitment and progress, community service, cultural commitments, and a positive attitude to school.

Outstanding Academic Excellence (primary and secondary award winners)

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student who has demonstrated outstanding academic excellence in any curriculum area in 2026 and who has displayed a positive attitude to school and a commitment to their future.

Outstanding Student Leadership (primary and secondary award winners)

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student who has demonstrated exceptional skills in promoting, encouraging, and supporting student participation across their school and in their community.

Outstanding Achievement in Public Speaking (primary and secondary award winners)

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student who has demonstrated exemplary skills in public speaking. The award recognises Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students' ability to speak with authority and confidence and the ability to maintain audience interest.

Outstanding Achievement in Performing/Creative/Visual Arts (primary and secondary award winners)

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student who has demonstrated outstanding talent and application in the performing, creative or visual arts.

Outstanding Achievement in Sport (primary and secondary award winners)

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student who has represented their school and community, demonstrated fairness, integrity, and outstanding achievement in sport.

NSW DoE Outstanding School-Based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student who has maintained outstanding commitment, effort, and application in completing their School Based Apprenticeship/Traineeship (SBAT), which includes high application to workplace training and Vocational Education and Training (VET) course, alongside their Higher School Certificate (HSC).

NSW DoE Outstanding VET in Schools Student of the Year

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student who has demonstrated outstanding achievement, commitment, effort, and application to completing their VET and HSC commitments.

Link to nomination forms: [21st Annual Nanga Mai Awards Student Nomination Form](#) and [21st Annual Nanga Mai Awards SBAT & TVET Nomination Form](#)

STAFF AWARDS

Staff who are current employees of the department are eligible to be nominated for one (or more) of the following awards:

Outstanding contribution to educational achievement by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff member

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee of the NSW Department of Education who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, their families, and communities.

Outstanding contribution to early educational achievement by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff member

Presented to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee within the NSW Early Education and Care sector who delivers authentic, culturally responsive care for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, showing outstanding commitment to improving the educational outcomes for students, their families, and communities.

Outstanding contribution to educational achievement by a non-Aboriginal staff member

Presented to a non-Aboriginal employee of the NSW Department of Education who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and a commitment to working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, their families, and communities.

Outstanding leadership in Aboriginal education

Presented to a NSW Department of Education employee who has demonstrated exemplary leadership and capacity building among staff, schools and the school community and an ongoing commitment to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

Outstanding leadership in Aboriginal languages

Presented to a NSW Department of Education employee who has demonstrated strong commitment to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students through the implementation of a school Aboriginal languages program.

Outstanding contribution to educational achievement by a non-school based staff member

Presented to a non-school based employee of the NSW Department of Education who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to the well-being and educational achievements of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

Link to nomination form: [21st Annual Nanga Mai Awards Staff Nomination Form](#)

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY AWARDS

NSW public schools and Aboriginal community members are eligible to be nominated for one (or more) of the following awards:

Outstanding early education and care service

Presented to a service that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to creating a respectful and culturally responsive learning environment for students, staff, families, and their local Aboriginal communities.

Outstanding contribution to educational achievement by an Aboriginal community member

Presented to an Aboriginal community member who has contributed significantly to the successful educational achievement of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

Outstanding school and community partnership

Presented to a school that has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to respectful and productive partnerships with students, staff, parents, and their local Aboriginal communities.

Outstanding commitment to increasing knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal histories, culture, and experiences of Aboriginal people.

Presented to a school or a community of schools that have demonstrated a strong commitment to establishing a culture of respect, caring and inclusive teaching practices which recognise, value, and meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

Link to nomination form: [21st Annual Nanga Mai Awards School/Community Nomination Form](#)