



GRIFFITH INSTITUTE FOR TOURISM

RESEARCH CAPABILITY
STATEMENT

Make it matter



**Australia's visitor economy
comprises the wide range of
industries that provide goods
and services to visitors who
travel to a destination for a
variety of purposes, including
leisure, education, business
and employment**

Australian Government, 2023, THRIVE 2030, p. 3



Griffith University is ranked #1 in Australia and in the top 10 worldwide for Tourism and Hospitality*

The Griffith Institute for Tourism was established in 2014 and has become Australia's most prominent tourism research institute focused on providing evidence-based practical solutions. Our membership includes over 120 academic, adjunct and PhD members.

Our team includes business and economics, marketing, environmental science, aviation, technology and Big Data analytics, architecture, health, urban planning and more. We work to address current and future research problems facing the visitor economy.

In addition to world-class research, we deliver strategic planning, capacity building and training, and stakeholder consultation services for government and business.

Our interdisciplinary approach can provide new insights and innovative ways to tackle issues facing destinations and businesses, with significant impact and expertise in the following research clusters:

- **Climate Change Action**, led by Professor James Higham and Dr Johanna Loehr
- **Events & Sports Management**, led by Associate Professor Popi Sotiriadou and Professor Charles Arcodia
- **Resilient & Sustainable Tourism**, led by Associate Professor Anna Kralj and Dr Sebastian Smith
- **Visitor Economy Analytics**, led by Dr Margarida Abreu Novais and Dr Truc Le

Griffith University acknowledges the people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land. We pay respect to the Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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MAY 2026

Welcome to the Griffith Institute for Tourism Capability Statement.

Our Institute, located in the tourism mecca of Queensland (Australia), aims to significantly contribute to the local communities and economies as we prepare for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games. We also seek to deliver projects that impact national and international visitor economies, working with cities and regions to help them develop integrated destination management and marketing plans informed by the latest innovations and data. Our projects in Asia and the Pacific strive to help emerging visitor economies grow and prosper sustainably, delivering positive outcomes for the planet.

A major global shift is underway with today's visitors seeking personalised, high-quality experiences, expecting destinations to reflect authentic cultural and environmental values. Challenges brought about since the COVID-19 pandemic and rise of AI necessitate transformation in how we view tourism, and the way tourism works. We need to reframe our thinking and adapt our models to the new normal. Here at the Griffith Institute for Tourism, we want to provide the expertise to assist tourism, hospitality, sport, and events stakeholders in leveraging profitable and sustainable businesses and not-for-profit organisations.

This publication encapsulates some of the outstanding work and experiences of our researchers. It gives an understanding of our capabilities and expertise so that you are well-informed on how our Institute can best assist you. Given this new operating environment, having evidence-based decisions informed by our research will empower you to optimise your strategy and become a market leader.

I invite you to read this document and learn more about how the Griffith Institute for Tourism can work with your organisation to make better decisions, so you are forward-focused and future-ready.

Professor Sarah Gardiner
Director, Griffith Institute for Tourism



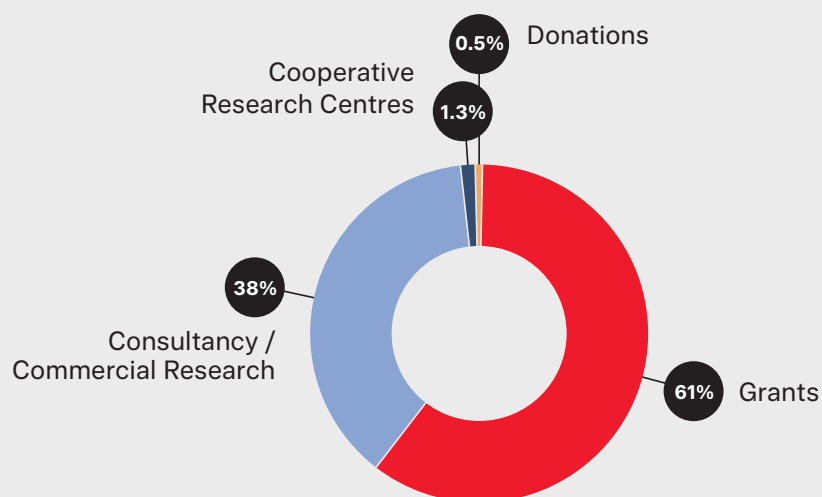
ENGAGEMENT

Our Institute & the Industry

The Institute comprises experienced tourism professionals with whom external partners regularly engage to assist in securing and delivering grants and consultancy research projects for government and industry. Since 2014 we have been awarded 649 projects. We have consistently worked with organisations across multiple years to offer transformative and impactful outcomes to regions, businesses, and communities.

As presented later in this document, our research engagement and expertise revolve around four research clusters. These clusters are well-established areas of expertise that conduct impactful research projects. We also have a number of specialist research areas where a smaller group of researchers engage with emerging topics. As a result, many of our research projects concern tourism and climate change, regional and resilient communities, sport and events management, and the visitor economy and indicators.

We work with all types of organisations – from large public sector departments to small businesses – to deliver effective and impactful results. Some of our projects comprise long-lasting collaboration with our partners to achieve deeper transformational outcomes. In other instances, we carry out single projects to address specific research or training needs. The Institute is highly capable of handling multiple projects in any given year. The following pages highlight the breadth and depth of our research and its contribution to businesses and society.



**External Income Source
(2015-2025)**

- Australian Research Council
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- Etheridge Shire Council
- Murweh Shire Council
- Austrade
- EarthCheck Pty Limited
- Department of Industry
- Department of Climate Change
- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
- Metro South Hospital and Health Service
- Department of Health and Aged Care
- National Injury Insurance Agency QLD
- The Wellcome Trust Ltd
- Motor Accident Insurance Commission
- Westpac Banking Corporation
- Commonwealth Bank of Australia
- City of Gold Coast
- Queenstown Lakes District Council

**Some of our main external funding partners
(2020-2025)**



Photographer:
Peter Wallis | Newspix

I am proud to be part of a motivated and dedicated team of researchers, administrators and students, focused on making a positive and practical contribution to the future of our industry and our communities.

Our Professor of Practice: **Daniel Gschwind**

Tourism has always been at the intersection of diverse commercial, social, and environmental processes. The sector has become a global economic driver and a factor of increasingly complex community and ecological challenges. As industry and governments work on crafting a crisis recovery and preparing for a climate-challenged future, we must contend with political and economic uncertainties that reverberate through the business community and challenge policymakers everywhere. As such, innovative and multidisciplinary solutions are needed to tackle these complexities – in which the Institute excels.

The Institute has been at the forefront of applying research outcomes to practical questions affecting the visitor economy. Successful collaborations with businesses, government agencies and other institutions have contributed to the Institute's success

in global research rankings. The Griffith Institute for Tourism is ready to work with our partners to shape a competitive and sustainable future through innovation and collaboration.

Daniel Gschwind was the Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council from 2001 to 2022, representing the industry in numerous committees and forums. In 2022, he was appointed Professor of Practice for the Griffith Institute for Tourism. In addition, Daniel currently holds several prominent roles, including Chair of the Queensland Music Festival, Director of Tourism Whitsundays, Jobs Queensland board member, Chair of the Tourism Reef Advisory Committee of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and an Honorary Consul for Switzerland.



For more
information on
Daniel Gschwind

The GIFT Experience



By Minh Nhan

Xin chào! I am from Vietnam and am currently a PhD candidate at Griffith University. My research explores how virtual tourism experiences can be a positive psychological approach to support wellbeing of the workforce. Being a PhD student member of the Griffith Institute for Tourism (GIFT) has opened many doors to me. GIFT's biosensor lab has been essential to making my research possible. I have been using GIFT's state-of-the-art technology in my research, including virtual reality equipment and biosensors that measure how the body responds to these experiences in real time.

In addition to the academic aspects, the Institute also provided networking and experiential opportunities. I have had a chance to connect with industry experts through professional development events for PhD candidates. Through these events, I learn how to translate my research into practice and make real-world impact. Being part of the Institute continuously motivates me to ensure my work makes a genuine difference.



If you would like to know more about undertaking a PhD program at the Griffith Institute for Tourism, please go to this link on Griffith Business School Research.



By Yi Bian

Kia ora, I am a third-year PhD candidate from Shanghai, China. My research examines how regenerative tourism and ecological restoration can work together to address climate change and biodiversity loss in Aotearoa New Zealand. At the Griffith Institute for Tourism, I am supported by an interdisciplinary supervisory team spanning human geography, plant ecology, and political philosophy, enabling close collaboration with tourism operators, conservation practitioners, policymakers, and Māori representatives. My work bridges different knowledge systems to support more just and ecologically meaningful transitions in tourism.

I engage with research not only as knowledge production, but as a form of climate action that emerges through practice, dialogue, and ongoing learning. I have presented at Adaptation Futures 2025, the flagship conference of the World Adaptation Science Programme (WASP) and contributed to the Canberra Climate Talks hosted by the German Embassy and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). These experiences reflect GIFT's strong integration of research, industry, and policy, and position my work to inform policy and contribute to transformative pathways toward regenerative futures.



Industry Advisory Board

Photo on right page above: Jan Hutton at one of our "IndusTEA" events with staff and students. This event is an opportunity for PhD candidates to meet the Advisory Board and pitch their research to tourism industry experts.

The Institute team has a diverse and deep knowledge base in tourism and the visitor economy. This presents a powerful opportunity to work with the sector to solve complex macro issues, which the industry often does not have the research expertise or breadth of insight to tackle independently. In return, by collaborating with the Griffith Institute for Tourism, the public and private sectors can assist the development of future tourism top talent and contribute to the industry's

overall progress on critical issues such as resilience, data, impact, and climate change. Our role as the Advisory Board is to help guide the agenda for the Institute, ensuring their work remains innovative and relevant to the sector's needs, current and emerging.



Chair of the Industry Advisory Board

Liz Savage

Non-Executive Director of Intrepid Travel

Experienced Company Director with board roles across ASX-listed, private and not-for-profit organisations in travel, tourism, hospitality and sport. Liz brings 30+ years of international leadership experience across airlines, airports and customer-driven businesses. Liz's particular strengths include strategy, major capital and commercial decisions, customer value, digital transformation and navigating complex operating environments.

Previously, Liz held C-suite commercial roles across the UK, Europe and Australia, including Business Development Director at easyJet and Chief Commercial Officer at Virgin Australia.



Industry Advisory Board Members

Stewart Moore

**CEO and Founder of EarthCheck
and Executive Director of the APEC
International Centre for Sustainable
Tourism**

With over 30 years' experience across the Asia-Pacific, Stewart specialises in sustainable tourism planning, destination management, and enterprise development. Stewart has advised both public and private sectors, authored numerous publications, and has held senior leadership and advisory roles across tourism research and industry bodies. He is internationally recognised for his contribution to sustainability.

Fiona Hood

**Head of Strategy & Risk Brisbane
Airport Corporation**

An Executive General Manager with deep expertise in strategy, transformation and innovation, with a strong focus on infrastructure, sustainability, digital and commercial outcomes. Fiona is known for translating long-term vision into practical action, most notably through leading Brisbane Airport's BNE 2050 strategy, and for aligning strategy and culture to drive organisational performance.

Jan Hutton

**CEO of Australian Tourism
Data Warehouse**

A trusted business transformation leader focused on the business of tourism, Jan provides strategic direction to align organisations and respond to emerging issues in the Travel & Tourism sector. With over two decades of C-suite experience, she advances sustainable success through digital transformation, including AI, and collaborates across sectors to drive positive outcomes.

Rhonda Appo

First Nations Tourism Expert

Rhonda is a proud Mamu woman and Indigenous Tourism Champion. Rhonda currently is the Indigenous Program Manager with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council where she is working towards the goal of Queensland becoming renowned as the number 1 destination for First Nations tourism

Siggi Gudergan

**Professor of Strategy,
James Cook University**

Siggi is known for his work on business innovation, transformation and performance. He also is a Visiting Distinguished Professor at Aalto University in Finland, Visiting Professor at Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Wien) in Austria, and Emeritus Professor at the University of Waikato in New Zealand.

Avril Harris

**Executive Director Events,
Experience Gold Coast**

Avril leads the Events team at Experience Gold Coast, with extensive experience in event strategy and stakeholder engagement. She is passionate about collaboration and innovation, driving the growth of the city's visitor economy while celebrating its arts and cultural experiences. Avril guides the attraction and delivery of global events that generate positive economic, social and cultural outcomes, supported by strong industry, community and government partnerships.

Grant Ferres

**Head of Tourism Research Australia
and Head of Visitor Economy
Sustainability and International
Markets at Australian Trade and
Investment Commission (Austrade)**

Grant oversees visitor economy sustainability, international markets, and the preparation of official tourism statistics and industry analysis. Grant previously held senior economic and policy roles in the Australian Treasury and worked on labour market analysis in the UK civil service.

Climate Change Action Research Cluster

The Climate Change Action cluster brings together tourism and climate change experts who aim to help tourism businesses, destinations, governments, and regional organisations to reduce climate change risk. This outcome is achieved by decarbonising tourism-related operations in line with the Paris Agreement and successfully adapting to mitigate the increasing impact of climate change.

Our researchers have expertise in the following areas:

- **Carbon footprint analysis:** We comprehensively analyse destinations and recommend carbon footprint mitigation strategies.
- **Impact assessment:** We assess tourism's vulnerability to climate change impacts and provide recommendations to address them.
- **Policy analysis:** We evaluate the integration of tourism and climate change policies and how to improve them.
- **Climate change governance:** We analyse tourism governance effectiveness to address climate change, including the enabling environment.
- **Climate change strategies:** We identify climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies that help balance the impact of tourism on the environment and broadly contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Leveraging the tourism sector's role in locally led restoration efforts to accelerate climate and biodiversity action.
- Developing climate action plans for two Queensland destinations.
- Investigating the integration of justice in national climate change policies.
- Identifying regenerative approaches for climate action in tourism.
- Investigating VR/AR technology applications for regenerative tourism.
- Investigating optimisation of regional tourism destinations.

Our recent projects include:

- Co-developing just adaptation for urban tourism.
- Calculating carbon emissions and development of future emission scenarios for some Australian destinations.

Climate Change Action cluster members actively participate in international science review panels such as the Executive Board of the Tourism Panel on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Their works inform policy recommendations and contribute to advancing science-based climate action across the global tourism system.



The Climate Justice and Tourism research programme at Griffith University was initiated in 2024 to advance interdisciplinary research at the intersection of climate change, tourism, and social equity, led by Dr Raymond Rastegar (pictured left). Early work in the programme resulted in the development of the first dedicated framework on climate justice in tourism, providing a foundation for subsequent research and policy engagement. The programme focuses on embedding justice principles into climate policy and practice, addressing how climate risks and responses unevenly affect communities, workers, and ecosystems across tourism systems. This work has been further strengthened through the award of an ARC Discovery Project in 2025 on extreme heat and urban tourism, which examines how climate hazards intersect with vulnerability and governance, and co-develops just adaptation strategies for destinations. Working with national and international collaborators, the programme generates evidence-based insights to support equitable net-zero transitions, inclusive climate governance, and resilient tourism futures.



Events & Sports Management Research Cluster

The Events and Sports Management cluster is leading innovative projects that harness the momentum of Brisbane 2032. Our research informs the strategic planning, delivery, and legacies of sporting events, festivals and business events. Through collaboration and insight, we aim to enhance outcomes for communities, governments, and the Australian events and sporting ecosystem.

The Institute's events and sports management cluster have recently completed several projects.

- A holistic evaluation of the ICF Slalom World Championships held in Penrith, October 2025. Commissioned by Paddle Australia, this work involved a social impact analysis, pre- and post-event surveys and water quality analysis, highlighting the multi-disciplinary insights Australia's largest tourism institute can bring to event evaluations.
- The Sustainability and Resilience Building Toolkit was co-designed, piloted, and refined in partnership with Experience Gold Coast's events division. The project embedded sustainability and resilience into event planning and delivery, integrating social, economic, and environmental considerations. This collaborative approach produced practical resources tailored to Gold Coast events and provides a replicable model for organisations aiming to strengthen sustainable event management and community resilience.
- Currently underway, GIFT research Associate Professor Popi Sotiriadou is leading a landmark three-year research project in conjunction with Swimming Australia that aims to transform how Australia understands and engages with its swimming population. The project will generate the first comprehensive national picture of both member and non-member swimmers, enabling Swimming Australia to design more inclusive programs, strengthen participation pathways, and improve long-term retention.



Resilient & Sustainable Tourism Research Cluster

The outcomes of this research cluster foster resilience and sustainability for communities and businesses in regional and remote destinations. Through collaboration with local residents, organisations and visitors in peripheral regions, the Institute's members support the development of unique co-created tourism offerings that are aligned with the cultural, economic and geographical characteristics of the local environment.

These authentic peak tourism experiences generate diversified sources of employment and revenue in areas that traditionally rely on agriculture and natural resource extraction for economic income. Our approach involves the direct input of local communities into the co-creation of new tourism attractions – contributing to the preservation of a region's culture and heritage, enhancing local pride and providing new spaces for social gathering. In this way, regional and remote communities become more liveable, enticing new residents to move to the area, and encouraging new generations born in the area to stay. A sense of place, combined with solid economic diversification, contributes to the preparedness for and recovery from inevitable economic and environmental shocks.

The cluster draws on the expertise of a comprehensive range of academic disciplines, including tourism, planning, experience design, technology, architecture, and economics. We deliver high-quality, innovative and place-based solutions that apply the latest in cutting-edge knowledge and technology. Since 2021, the researchers in this cluster have brought over \$12 million in external funding to our partners in Australia and the Pacific region.

Our services include:

- Master plans, strategic plans, and operational plans
- Grant writing for major funding schemes
- Tourism infrastructure project management
- Community development initiatives for increased regional liveability
- Workforce attraction, retention, and capacity building programs
- Tourism small business mentoring
- Tourism internship placement and administration
- Tourism eco-certification process management



Images: top image – information hut at Cumberland Dam built as part of a completed project with Etheridge Shire Council, bottom image – Associate Professor Anna Kralj at Cumberland Dam where construction of a boardwalk and bird hide are taking place as part of a current project.



Visitor Economy Analytics Research Cluster

The Visitor Economy Analytics cluster brings together experts in tourism behaviour, Big Data, and destination management. Working with a range of stakeholders, our team supports smarter decision-making through data-driven insights—helping partners measure tourism’s economic value, enhance visitor experiences, and plan for more efficient, responsive, and sustainable tourism systems.

Our team has a wealth of experience in government, industry, and academia. We have assisted our partners in policy advice, Big Data, and data mining, measuring the economic value of tourism, developing tourist experience and planning, and consuming and evaluating tourism systems, specifically:

- Working with government-provided tourism data from sources such as Tourism Research Australia (TRA) and Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- Developing performance indicators and metrics to assess tourism outcomes across economic, social, and environmental dimensions
- Developing visitor insights through the integration and analysis of multiple data sources
- Developing and training on tourism satellite accounts
- Measuring the economic impact of domestic, inbound, and outbound tourism
- Developing visitor profiles for tourism destinations
- Forecasting visitor trends through statistical analysis
- Conducting cost–benefit analyses of tourism’s economic, social, and environmental impacts

Current projects in this space include collaborations with domestic and international government entities and academic institutions to develop comprehensive two-way capability building and visitor profiling to deepen strategic tourism trade and encourage reciprocal tourism growth with Australia. Other initiatives focus on reviewing international tourism data hubs, developing frameworks for analysing destination performance, and identifying appropriate indicators and measures to assess that performance.



Specialist Research Areas

Biosensor analysis

GIFT operates a high-tech biosensor lab, comprising innovative technology that can measure emotional reactions to tourism experiences in real-time – providing unique insights into tourist behaviours that extend beyond traditional survey or interview approaches to data collection. The lab features excellent tools – including virtual reality eye-tracking, screen-based eye-tracking, mobile eye tracking glasses, facial expression analysis, skin conductance, and ECG – to gain deeper and more objective insights into the drivers of behaviour, memorability and wellbeing.

Above (from left): Eye-tracking heat map. Mai Nguyen at the Biosensor Lab testing the virtual reality features.

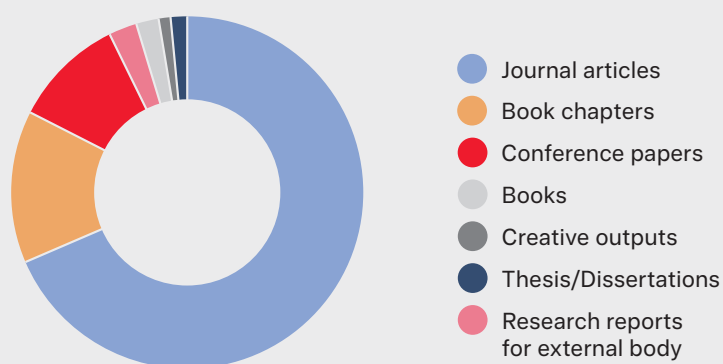
Academic Contributions

In the “academic world”, research recognition and prestige derive from several scholarly activities including number and quality of peer reviewed journal articles published, citation of work and editorial board memberships.

In the past 10 years GIFT members have published 5167 outputs including 3,501 journal articles, 715 book chapters, 106 books, 533 conference papers and 135 external body reports. With a combined Field Weighted Citation Index (FWCI) of 1.76*, GIFT researchers are performing 76% above the world average for similar articles on like topics published during the same period. Benchmarked in the All Science Journal Classifications (ASJC)

subject of Business, Management and Accounting (Scopus), GIFT researchers outperform all other Australian Universities in having the highest percentage of articles that are in the top 5%, top 10% and top 25% of articles cited (Scopus, 2026). GIFT’s research citation reach spans 160 countries across 27 subject areas. Our researchers are demonstrating impact outside of academia with papers cited in over 900 national and international policy documents across organisations such as the OECD, World Bank, United Nations Environment Programme and UNESCO.

*FWCI measures the citation performance of a publication relative to similar publications worldwide.



**GIFT scholarly outputs
(2015-2025)**
*(% of total publications)

Over 77% of journal articles are published in journals ranked in the top quarter percentile (Q1 journals representing the highest quality research). The Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) is a widely accepted journal quality list, classifying journals into four ranks: A*, A, B or C. In the

past 10 years 2322 of GIFT's outputs have been published in journals appearing in the ABDC quality journal list. Of these, 75% are within A and A* journals. GIFT research is also published in collaboration with national and international partners from both within and outside academia.

Journal

Annals of Tourism Research

Event Management

European Journal of Marketing

European Journal of Tourism Research

Frontiers in Sustainable Tourism

International Journal of Event and Festival Management

International Journal of Sport Communication

Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Horizons

Journal of Sustainable Tourism

Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Journal

Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events

Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science

Journal of Service Management

Journal of Sport Management

Journal of Vacation Marketing

Sport Marketing Quarterly

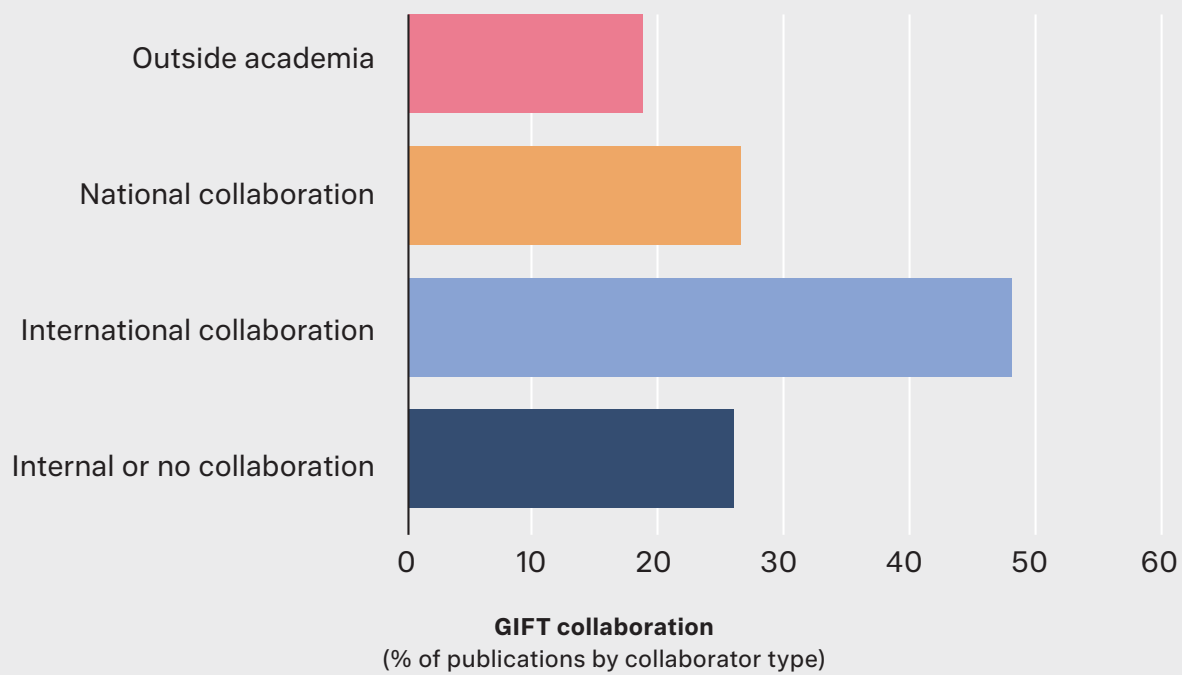
Sport Management Review

Tourism Management

Tourism Recreation Research

Tourism Review

Some of the journals where GIFT researchers are Editorial Board members



CONTACT US

If you would like to find out more about us or how you can engage the Griffith Institute for Tourism, please do not hesitate to contact us at the following details:

Email gift@griffith.edu.au

Web griffith.edu.au/institute-tourism



fb.com/GriffithInstituteTourism



linkedin.com/company/griffith-institute-for-tourism



instagram.com/griffithinstitutefortourism/