



**Australian Government**

**Department of Education,  
Skills and Employment**

**2020 Mission Based Compact  
Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Torrens University Australia**

**PURPOSE**

This compact is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the University. Entering into a compact is one of the quality and accountability requirements, which a higher education provider must meet under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) as a condition of receiving a grant. Specifically, subsection 19-110(1) of HESA requires that Table A and Table B providers must, in respect of each year for which a grant is paid to the provider under HESA, enter into a mission-based compact with the Commonwealth for a period that includes that year.

All strategies should provide qualitative and/or quantitative measures of assessment.

**MISSION**

Torrens University's four promises to its students (*Everyone is industry connected, Everyone is global, Everyone can change their world and Everything is designed for you*) continue to drive the University's strategic focus on significantly increasing graduate employability and helping *students identify & thrive in their chosen field*. This focus sits within Torrens' vision of *When our students and graduates succeed, countries prosper and societies benefit*.

Four Strategic Priorities, feeding into senior leadership Key Performance Objectives, drive the focus over the term of the compact:

- Engage our people
- Ensure student success
- Secure the future
- Simplify the business

Growing the University's research capability is also a key objective with an ambitious 2018-2023 Strategic Research Plan implemented in June 2018.

Torrens University's [2020 Strategic Priorities](#) are accessible via the link.

The Vice Chancellor has spearheaded the development and agreement of the proposed Torrens University Academic Freedom – Statement of Principles. It was informed by the Report of the Independent Review of Freedom of Speech in Australian Higher Education Providers. The document is been already submitted for support by the Governing Board and fully supported in principle.

The draft Statement has been subsequently debated at Torrens University Academic Board and is now being socialized across the University with all academic and student groups. The feedback from these stakeholders will be incorporated and a final Statement of Principles signed off at Academic and procedural review will be completed as the agreed Statement of Principles are fully integrated into University life.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

### LEARNING AND TEACHING OBJECTIVES

Torrens University overarching Academic Framework contextualises and outlines the University's Learning and Teaching Objectives and is available via this web link: [https://www.torrens.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2019/08/Academic-Framework\\_Torrens-University.pdf](https://www.torrens.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2019/08/Academic-Framework_Torrens-University.pdf)

An annual Learning and Teaching Plan then outlines the (1) high-level goals in the Academic Framework, and adds (2) strategies and (3) specific undertakings. The first two levels are:

Learning, Teaching, Professional Development and Scholarship

- Build active profile for Centre for Learning, Teaching and Scholarship
- Foster academic development and scholarship in the Verticals (Faculties)

Innovation, Programs, Andragogy

- Extend portfolio internationalisation
- Increase availability of Flex module offerings
- Improve course accreditation and review

Student Success, Learning and Outcomes

- Ensure successful student journey
- Promote quality academic outcomes

Learning Support and Infrastructure

- Build the profile of Learning Services within the Office of the Vice Chancellor (OVC)

Industry/Professional Practice and Career Connectivity

- Further implement professional practice in learning

### UNIVERSITY ADMISSION TRANSPARENCY

As part of its commitment to equity and a belief that everyone should have access to further education Torrens University provides experience-based entry to higher education study for students who do not have an ATAR score.

Applicants who do not meet the educational course entry requirements are assessed for admission based on relevant work and life skills and experience. Applicants are required to submit a Work Life Experience form and provide evidence of their ability to undertake study at the required level. Each application is assessed by the relevant Program Director on the basis of the applicant's reasonable prospect of success.

#### **Applicants with Work Life Experience**

##### **(Alternative to HE, VET or Secondary education criteria)**

Demonstrated ability to undertake study at the required level:

- broadly relevant work experience (documented e.g. CV), demonstrating a reasonable prospect of success; OR
- formal, informal or non-formal study, completed or partially completed, demonstrating a reasonable prospect of success; OR
- written submission to demonstrate reasonable prospect of success.

**Evaluation Framework**

TUA is currently completing an alternative entry pilot scheme which commenced in February 2019, which accepted a small cohort of students entry into a University Bachelor Level qualification based on year 12 achievement in individual subjects, which relate to a chosen University level qualification rather than overall ATAR rank. Our early review of the pilot cohort for the effect of ATAR/non ATAR entry levels on student progression and pass rates has indicated that we have not seen a strong correlation between these alternate entry students and also lower ATAR and progression rate, with all students achieving an acceptable pass rate. The pilot will continue to be completed and a decision around introducing this as a permanent alternative entry scheme will be made in March 2020 based on further review and discussion from our Academic Board. TUA will then extend this ATAR/non ATAR entry evaluation pilot further in 2020 to all undergraduate students.

**UNIVERSITY RETENTION STRATEGIES**

As part of the Torrens Retention Strategy, a Retention Steering Group consisting of Academic and Support Service staff leaders, meets fortnightly to monitor risks as well as the **coordination** and progress of retention activities across various departments. Annual improvement plans across Academic and other Support Service areas are put in place and informed by customer insights such as Net Promoter Score surveys and Subject and Lecturer Evaluation surveys.

To guide and inform these plans throughout the year, student retention figures are reported weekly with a comprehensive review at the end of each trimester cycle, to inform any immediate changes required for the upcoming term, as well as any potential impact on longer term plans.

Additionally, a specific ‘Students At Risk’ process is in place, highlighting students considered at ‘low engagement risk’ (measured by class attendance and learning management system usage) or ‘academic risk’ (measured by assessment submission and academic progression), ensuring that staff are offering the appropriate additional academic or other support services to the identified students.

Students who choose to leave Torrens are encouraged to have a conversation with a relevant staff member prior to submitting their withdrawal. This is in order to better understand their reasons for their withdrawal request, to discuss the options and support are available for them, and to support the students where needed in determining what might be best for them in their current circumstance. For any students choosing to still submit their withdrawal request, their ‘Confirmation of Withdrawal’ email contains a survey investigating their reasons for withdrawal further, their needs, and what could have potentially done to better support them. Moreover, our Course and Career Advisor teams contact any students who are merely taking a break from their studies and who intend to return.

The suite of strategies implemented through the Retention Project has produced very encouraging results: Total retention in T3 2020 is 87.6%.

**RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING AND INNOVATION**

**RESEARCH EXCELLENCE**

Informed by the Torrens University Australia (TUA) Strategic Research Plan (2018-2023) and Operating Principles in our Long-Range Plan (LRP), the three principles guiding our research future include collaboration, outcomes and innovation. We collaborate with industry, community, professional bodies, Government and other stakeholders in Australia and overseas engaging them in the research process as co-researchers and partners. We aim for excellence in multidisciplinary approaches as we develop foci of research excellence while expanding and building our research expertise. Our research culture is informed by our Here for Good Charter which drives our emphasis on research excellence, integrity, relevance and flexibility to discover innovative real-world solutions for the challenges facing society now and into the future.

Torrens is a new university committed to excellence in research and the creation of new applied knowledge. The character of our research reflects our commitment to offering innovative and meaningful contributions to our communities as well as to their economic development.

Our research centres (health, business, education, design and creative technology including artificial intelligence) align to research themes and provide multi-disciplinary contexts to bring collaborative partnerships together to focus on problems of local and global significance. The multi-disciplinary nature of our research centres encourage cross-faculty collaboration affording all academics the opportunity to develop research capacity into the future. Further, numerous research support schemes are available to Torrens University academics and research students, supporting research excellence and capability. TUA has an ongoing and active focus on planning for ERA 2023.

### **RESEARCH TRAINING**

Our Research Centres, under experienced academic leadership, drive research activity, support supervision for research students and provide mentorship for academics and research students as they develop research expertise. Research Centres are multidisciplinary encouraging cross-faculty collaboration. Current areas of priority for higher degree research at Torrens University Australia include:

- growing the capacity of our staff to provide quality supervision to support our HDR students to timely completions;
- improving the quality of our HDR programs, including research skills training, transferable skills development and relevant professional development;
- increasing opportunities for industry placements, joint supervision by research end-users and commercialisation and engagement activities. We aim to provide/support at least 10% PhD Industry placements per year through internships, scholarships and partnerships.

### **RESEARCH TRANSLATION**

The TUA Strategic Research Plan (2018-2023) focuses on high quality reciprocal Universities, Research Institutes and Industry partnerships in undertaking projects. We continue to implement a wide range of dissemination and communication strategies to share research outcomes, and to encourage applied or translational research. Torrens University Australia is building strong relationships with new partner organisations and strengthening our links with other institutions including:

- International and national collaborations with researchers, educational institutions, communities, industries and governments around the world;
- Community engagement with a wide range of civil society, educational, health and professional associations;
- Policy engagement with government, regional and international bodies;
- Industry partners aligned to our consultancy focus;
- Laureate network collaboration with our fellow institutions within the Laureate network.

Torrens University is focused on fostering strong ties with industry and has a dedicated team of Industry specialists in all relevant disciplines. All Research Centres actively seek industry collaboration and linkage research partnerships as part of their mission. Torrens University completes annual audits of industry and other end user collaborations.

The University encourages publication into high quality open access journals, providing funding for researchers who wish to publish within these outlets. The University's institutional repository allows researchers to make available outputs in a citable, shareable and discoverable manner and datasets and code can also be disseminated. Print media, national opinion articles and social media outlets are actively used to propagate new research findings.

## EQUITY

Torrens University has introduced and is in the process of embedding a robust and broad strategy to increase the enrolment and graduation of students from diverse backgrounds. The key elements are outlined below.

*Strategies for improving Indigenous outcomes and related targets for the term of this compact:*

- Diversity & Inclusion Policy implemented
- Indigenous Working Group (IWG) formulated with clear focus on Indigenous student initiatives
- Indigenous Liaison Advisor position funded and recruited into Full Time role
- Indigenous Strategic Work plan with strategic actions has been approved by IWG and on track for completion of first phase in 2019
- Business Intelligence dashboard created that allows for monitoring of indigenous sub-group
- Indigenous student page available on StudentHub
- Dispersal of three rounds of indigenous student scholarships with further awards planned for 2020
- In the process of creating the Reflection phase of Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for submission to Reconciliation Australia to launch for Reconciliation week 2020.

*Strategies for achieving equity for low socio-economic students and students from other equity groups:*

- Disability policy, fact sheets for students and staff and action plan templates have been implemented
- Disability Liaison Advisor position funded and recruited in full-time role
- Bespoke training in managing learners with a disability plan created for Administrative, Recruitment and Academic staff and shared in face-to-face, webinar and shared access drives
- On boarding process for students with disability refined to allow for student representation in plan support and creation to accommodate requests for reasonable access
- Diversity & Inclusion Policy reviewed and amended to embrace gender neutral terminology and inclusivity
- Disability Services page available on StudentHub
- Disability Steering Committee formed to address disability issues across the organisation. Membership composed of all facets of staff and student representation
- Work plan with strategic action presented and approved by Steering Committee
- LGBTQIA+ working group created to address matters of equity for this staff and students identifying in this group
- LGBTQIA+ page on StudentHub
- Newly established membership with Pride in Diversity will allow for commencement of awareness training for students and staff
- ALLY network to be established at each campus post training through Pride in Diversity
- LGBTQIA+ Strategic action plan created and approved with specific tasks for 2019-2021
- Business Intelligence dashboard created that allows for monitoring of sub-groups such as disability, first generation learners
- Student at Risk monitoring process of new students implemented

## LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

### LABOUR MARKET STRATEGIES FOR TORRENS UNIVERSITY

#### *Strategies for identifying skills gaps within the relevant student and business catchments*

- Skill gaps both at a global and local level are informed through a number of avenues – market reports, landscape surveys, whitepapers, trends analysis etc. This is on top of our internal systems/processes in place such as product summits, industry panels and course advisory committees. Input from all of these inform course development/update at a regular cadence throughout the year. The effectiveness of our strategies is tracked through key metrics that are checked via a range of surveys.
- Specifically, our courses are all informed by *Course Advisory Committees (CAC)*, which are comprised of prominent industry representatives. The CACs are formal bodies of our academic governance framework whose mandate is to feed industry intelligence into course design and assessment. Through the CAC mechanism, we use a feedback loop where courses take specific skills intelligence as input and validate course design and structure back through the CACs.

#### *Strategies for meeting labour market priorities at a local, regional and/or national level*

- Torrens University Australia's scope is national, therefore our approach to generating skilled graduates is to observe and analyse both national and State priorities and respond accordingly. Often, this manifests in observing the *skilled migration* list, such as the recent reintroduction of ICT professionals that prompted our university to design a suite of *Information Systems* courses.
- Our approach to developing workplace competencies in graduates has been informed by global research embodied in the *Laureate Professional Attribute* instrument. This proprietary instrument resulted from surveying 5000 employers around the globe to identify a core set of employability skills that can be seen to transcend industries, work patterns, vocations and professions. The Laureate Professional Assessment helps identify potential employees who have the 5 workplace competencies employers value most; analysing and solving problems, adapting to change, working well with others, achieving objectives and learning and self-development.

#### *Strategies to address employability and graduate attribute skills gaps and to ensure students are work-ready*

- Torrens University Australia offers a number of opportunities to students to integrate work into their study. Work integrated learning (WIL) is embedded throughout our courses, including live briefs in the classroom, industry guest speakers, industry internships/placements and student enterprise projects. These experiences are supervised by industry professionals allowing our students to practice and refine the skills and attributes they will need upon graduation. With a focus on WIL and applied training, students have an opportunity to build their confidence whilst also gaining clarity around their own graduate career goals.
- Our campuses have state-of-the-art, fully simulated, applied training facilities (e.g. high fidelity nursing simulation, Nesuto Leura, William Blue Dining, public facing health clinics, design studio), enabling our students to practice skills in a relevant and authentic learning environment.
- Torrens University employs subject-matter experts who are still working within their chosen industry to create content, train and mentor our students. This brings relevant and up-to-date content to our students instead of a sole theory/traditional academic approach. Our Industry linked Academics also leverage their own networks, bringing in Guest Lectures from industry and relevant associations to ensure our students are work-ready.
- In addition, the university employs *Industry Consultants* whose role it is to interface with industry, advocating on students' behalfs for finding work placements, as well as fostering the process of bringing industry into the classroom.
- Further, students at the postgraduate level are often already working and are able to integrate their work experience into the material they are studying. This can be achieved through reflective practices

in assessments, featuring their workplace in assessments or in sponsoring a capstone project at their workplace.

- Our Careers and Employability Team monitor and analyse expected graduate employment destinations and industry trends including growth, decline, flux and stability of industry areas. This team is also responsible for seeking industry input and endorsement opportunities, as well as securing work integrated learning opportunities for our students.

#### *The application of these strategies to admissions and enrolments*

- Upon admission to Torrens University Australia, students may take the opportunity to apply for *recognition of prior learning* through the assessment of formal or informal prior learning. The latter may include a consideration of their work experience and the deeming of equivalency of subject learning outcomes.

#### *How labour market strategies are taken into account in developing course offerings*

- Our nationally integrated Product Innovation Process Flow involves input from a range of stakeholders, including industry, academic staff, General Managers, Deans, Directors of Innovation, Industry and Employability, Program Directors, subject matter experts, careers and employability staff, sales and marketing, students and alumni.
- Our product development is also informed by data and metrics to identify skills gaps, market opportunities, competitor landscapes, employability outcomes, strategic alignments and key differentiators.
- The so-called ‘future of work’ is a phenomenon that our Directors of Innovation, Industry & Employability observe and catalogue. In their capture of market intelligence, the prevailing trends in the labour market—for example, the emergence of shorter-term work arrangements, the ‘gig’ economy and the rise of intelligent software—are incorporated into course offerings by giving primacy to ‘soft’ skills and authentic assessment.
- Torrens University Australia prizes constructive alignment as its predominant philosophy and methodology behind course design. In it, the specific learning activities and formative assessments are designed to scaffold the summative assessments. In this manner, students get to ‘try before they buy’, working in a controlled and supported environment before taking on the assessment for real. The summative assessments themselves align so that the student can demonstrate attainment of subject learning outcomes that, in turn, align to the course learning outcomes that the CAC help to author.

## **SECURITY MEASURES**

Torrens University takes cybersecurity and data privacy as paramount to ongoing University survivability. We have an advantage in our global reach with depth of cyber security knowledge, organization and practice. Torrens follows the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) cybersecurity principles and, as a Sarbanes Oxley enforced entity, adheres to strict ITGC controls ensuring best practices are followed on which there are regular audits.

Torrens University has a dynamic cybersecurity and protection function with several initiatives which has allowed the University to enhance its cybersecurity stance in the past three years.

Established best practice standards:

- Network segmentation with internal and externally facing firewalls
- Our computers utilize an SOE with access to an approved list of software for self-install. Users do not have local admin writes and cannot install software ad hoc
- Internet access is always achieved by egressing through externally facing firewalls
- Elevated privileges (Admin) is only provided to employees which require this for the function of their role. This access is audited quarterly and re-approved at that time

- Anti-virus software is installed on every server and computer with daily DAT file updates
- Daily backup of critical data with nightly replication to an offsite location

Self-initiated cyber security improvement program of works carried out in 2017:

- Active e-mail filtering with time-lapse sandboxfunction
- External sender banner on all non-Torrens inbounde-mails
- Anti-malware software is installed on every server and computer with access to an internet based definition repository for real-time malware evaluation
- DNS based web content filter employed on internet connections. This would block access to known malicious sites
- Vulnerability scanners are employed on internal networks which identify any unpatched or known exploits/vulnerabilities servers and computers. Once identified they are remediated within an appropriate compliance period depend it upon the severity of the vulnerability

2018: A continuation of the cyber security improvement program of works providing even greater protection

- Multifactor Authentication enabled for all staffe-mail
- Multifactor Authentication enabled for server based privileged access
- Security awareness training for all users mandatory on hire and done yearly
- Cyber Security insurance

Data management:

Torrens informational assets are categorized into Public, Internal, and Confidential which are treated appropriately with regards to their level of sensitivity. Data is secured with appropriate levels of access segregation and held encrypted when at rest.

Foreign interference:

*Cyber Security measures*

Torrens University takes external interference seriously whether foreign or domestic. We employ intrusion detection system Intrusion prevention system enabled firewalls on all internal networks. Quarterly User Access Reviews are performed on all systems related to or person information. In these UAR each user's manager must validate their employees continued need to access the system or data else the access is removed. A strict password rotation as well as Factor Authentication (MFA) on our e-mail system and all internal server access is enforced.

Torrens Cyber security actions align to the ACSC's "Strategies to mitigate cyber security incidents". Torrens' Cyber Security program is dynamic and continues to expand to meet the current and future security needs.

Governance and risk frameworks are robust with regular to the Governing Board's Audit & Risk Committee. For example, at its November 2019 meeting this Committee was briefed on how the Government's foreigner guidelines cover cyber security, governance and risk frameworks, due diligence on research communication and education on the risk of foreigner and knowledge sharing across the sector. The annual update on ICT Security risk briefing provided by the Head of IT Infrastructure highlighted the cyber security component in relation to the ANU and ACU hacking that occurred.

When acting as an Administering Institution, Torrens enters into a formal agreement with Institutions that any of the related research activities. These are discussed and approved by the Research Committee, provided there are no risks or potential threats to the integrity of the research. Due diligence is also conducted by the Legal team on the contractual terms and obligations of the research in line with Torrens' policies, Code of Conduct and Australian legislation. The formal agreements are subject to regular review by our research department, these actions assist to minimise the risk of foreign interference.



**SIGNED for and on behalf of**

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by Danielle Donegan, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Higher Education Division of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment as delegate of the Minister for Education.

**Signed by**

Danielle Donegan

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**Date:**

06/01/2021

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**In the presence of:**

**Signed by**

Kate Thompson

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**Position of witness**

Executive Officer

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**SIGNED for and on behalf of  
Torrens University Australia**

**Signed by**

Professor Alwyn Louw

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**Position**

Vice-Chancellor

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**In the presence of:**

**Signed by**

Julie Craig

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**Position or profession of witness**

VP Governance, Risk and Student Admin

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