

# OFFICIAL



Australian Government

Department of Education,  
Skills and Employment

## 2021-2023 MISSION BASED COMPACT BETWEEN THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA AND MURDOCH UNIVERSITY

### 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

The Murdoch University [Strategic Plan and Future Horizon 2017-2027](#) guides and informs the University's future direction and focus, incorporating five year progress goals and expectations for a ten year horizon. Murdoch is at the end of the first five years of the Plan. We envisage that a Strategic Plan review and refresh will be conducted once the new Vice Chancellor is installed. A preliminary review of outcomes to date will be undertaken by the Interim Vice Chancellor. Within the framework of the Strategic Plan and the social and economic environment in Western Australia, key outcomes thought to 2023 include:

- **COVID recovery.**  
Financial sustainability will be achieved through identifying and implementing operational efficiencies as well as developing new revenue streams, in particular active expansion of transnational educational opportunities ([TNE](#)). Progress monitored through demonstrable revenue source diversification; Total offshore student load; Number of domestic students in student exchange or in country experience.
- **Corporate and Academic Governance.**  
Review and implement [voluntary undertakings](#) to address risks identified by TEQSA to enhance our corporate and academic governance arrangements and external benchmarking of student performance across courses.
- **Consolidation of industry linkages and implementing the NPILF agenda.**  
Building on its translational research focus and partnerships with government agencies, and business and industry, Murdoch will enhance research commercialisation and utilise those research pathways to expand work integrated learning opportunities. Measures will include Research Income, including Total HERDC Income and Engagement Income; the proportion of industry ready Graduate Research Degrees; and measures of WIL aligned to teaching and learning outcomes.
- **CBD Vertical Campus and the New Academic Building.**  
With financial support under the State and Federal Government's [City Deal](#), Murdoch will create a vertical campus and eSports Stadium as part of a knowledge-based cultural precinct in the Perth CBD. In addition, construction commenced in mid-2021 on the University's New Academic Building, comprising approximately 16,000m<sup>2</sup> over four floors, which will be a modern timber structure that will provide flexibility to adapt to the changing delivery of

## OFFICIAL

education over time and will also include immersive industry collaboration facilities to enhance industry engagement in teaching and research.

### FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Murdoch University is committed to the principles of promoting and protecting academic freedom and freedom of speech. Following the publication of the French review report, Murdoch University commissioned an independent review of policies and procedures to assess alignment with the Model Code.

A working group, chaired by President of Academic Council, was established to consider the findings of the independent review, seek input from key stakeholders, and provide advice on any amendments that may be required to the University's policy documents.

On 9th December 2020 Murdoch University's Senate approved [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Regulations](#), which being Regulations sit above policies in the legislative hierarchy of the University. A review of the University's related legislative documents was commenced to determine inconsistencies and propose amendments towards alignment.

In June 2021 the Federal Department of Education provided an update on the alignment between the University's policies and the Model Code, following on the original report by Professor Walker. The updated report found the University's policies were mostly aligned to the Model Code with a few areas of non-alignment.

The areas of non-alignment are in relation to the objects of the Model Code and the purpose as stated in the University's *Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Regulations*; and clarification around the requirement to take into account the University's reputation.

These matters will be considered by the working group with a view to proposing amendments to the *Regulations* which will then be presented to Senate for approval in 2022.

### IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

**Introduce new employability focused curriculum delivery options** such as Murdoch Accelerate: Block teaching model for [Bachelor of Commerce](#) (initially) allowing students to complete course requirements within 2 calendar years, including significant engagement with Industry during that time through co-design, co-delivery and WIL opportunities. Metrics include student enrolments, an increase in WIL opportunities for students in courses where WIL is not required for accreditation purposes and Graduate Satisfaction.

**Digital experience:** Extend our reach by offering high quality courses and units for students who study online or in a combination of campus-based and online study. Expand reach by establishing mutually beneficial partnerships to create a rich portfolio of short course, unit and course offerings based on market need. Strengthen student success and engagement driven by advanced analytics and cohort monitoring. Establish a virtual study hub to support all learners studying one or more unit online, with a focus on students currently studying and commencing from offshore locations. Metrics include enrolments in online and blended course options, strength of course portfolio to attract new and returning students.

**Establish the Murdoch Learning and Teaching Model:** Focus on COVID recovery and return to campus that is safe and aligned with government advice, prioritising learning activities and campus activation that cannot be undertaken online. Redefine our learning and teaching model to focus on learning that is technology enhanced, rich in collaboration and interaction. Engage, nurture and recognise our educators in digital literacy professional development and scholarship to prepare for teaching in a range of learning environments including our New Academic Building. Focus on student mental health and wellbeing through curricular and extra-curricular activities. Metrics include number of staff engaged in professional learning, student satisfaction and

experience feedback, particularly in relation to teaching quality, learner engagement and learning resources through QILT.

In addition to these three institutional priorities, Murdoch provides services for students aligned to provider standards. These include:

#### Admissions Transparency

Murdoch provides a range of pathways to entry that are detailed in our annual [Admission and Pathways Guide](#). Entry requirements are provided for all courses with specific requirements for the four applicant groups identified (Higher Education Study, Vocational Education and Training, Recent Secondary Education, and Work Life Experience). Detail of relevant adjustment factors is provided as well as course level detail on potential advanced standing for relevant groups. Further detail on the range of ATAR scores of successful applicants and profile of all students commencing the course in the selected course group is also available.

#### Strengthening labour market outcomes

Murdoch has implemented an internally focused Career and Employability Strategy to address the university's commitment to: "playing a pivotal role in helping to prepare our graduates for a future ... often characterised by multiple careers and change, where agility, adaptability and creativity will be essential for success." The strategy incorporates:

- An Employability Teaching Toolkit to support all academic staff in integrating (embedding or making more explicit the existing) employability in curriculum as well as including two employability questions in the student feedback surveys for all undergraduate units.
- Developed a suite of interactive employability modules to assist students with their transition in, through and out of university or further study by application.
- Bring together a Professional Learning Team, including the Career Development Practitioner, within Learning, Teaching and Technology to further enhance curriculum transformation.
- Offer industry engagement and skill development programs aimed at increasing the employability and job/career readiness for students. These multidisciplinary co-curricular programs are available to students at no-cost and to further increase accessibility for all, a growing number are being included as approved programs for credit via the 3 credit point undergraduate unit *MSP201 Real World Learning*. Programs include but are not limited to:
  - [Students as Change Agents program](#) that empowers students to undertake a project aimed at creating positive change at Murdoch, including mentoring and project funding.
  - [Launchpad Academy](#) focused on entrepreneurial skill development.
  - [Murdoch Student Emerging Leaders program \(MSEL\)](#) providing leadership opportunities in support of not-for-profit organisations.
  - [Murdoch Industry Mentoring program \(MIM\)](#) connecting students with professionals aligned with their career aspirations.

#### Student mental health and wellbeing

The Access, Wellbeing and Equity unit has implemented new positions, including a Suicide Intervention Coordinator within the Counselling Service to assist with programs to reduce risk of suicide, and Student Wellbeing & Equity Ambassadors with a role to more actively promote inclusion and wellbeing of Murdoch students. These roles were fundamental in the successful running of a new initiative of [Wellbeing Wednesdays](#). The unit provides or coordinates [Support and Advice](#) services for students that offer personal support and services that facilitate personal care, for example financial support, counselling and LGBTIQ+ allyship.

## RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Murdoch University's [Research and Innovation Plan 2018-2023](#) facilitates consolidation and critical mass of research activities in key areas to make a contribution at the local, national and global level. Research is focused across three inter-related [core interdisciplinary themes](#) and institutes – food security (Food Futures Institute); health futures and translational medicine (Health Futures Institute) and environmental and biological sciences (Harry Butler Institute).

**Strategic alliances and appointments:** Appointments focused in core themes with excellence in appointees determined through publications in high quality journals as well as community and industry engagement. New appointments will seek to strengthen or develop strategic alliances with industry partners. The metric will be Category 2, 3, and 4 research income.

**Enabling platforms:** Review enabling platforms, their operations and sustainability with a view to consolidating more research facilities centrally to increase access, reduce duplication and where possible engage with commercial partners. The Australian National Phenome Centre ([ANPC](#)) is a key facility and operational model. Its goals are to accelerate better health outcomes, by building a world-class platform for transforming how we prevent, identify and treat disease; which will also be a platform for study and translation to address other significant health-related global challenges, including in relation to agriculture and food; linked to a global network of phenome centres. Success measures will include increase in innovative behaviours (invention disclosure and patenting activity); and University Spin-Out Activity.

**Graduate Research School:** The School provides capacity to grow the internal support programs for supervisors and [students](#) and to provide better oversight of student candidacy. 50:50 industry scholarships scheme created to boost numbers and industry relevance. An [Accelerated Masters with Research Training](#) (full 12 months duration) was introduced to create a PhD pipeline. It focuses on global grand challenges, organised around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). PhD candidates are encouraged to undertake industry-based placements and internships, both organised in-house and through the [WA iPrep system](#) and the [APR.Intern program](#). Success measures include HDR enrolments; proportion of industry placements; and HDR student satisfaction.

**Research translation and commercialisation:** The [Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2018-2023](#) provides guidance on mechanisms to improve the translational pipeline from invention to implementation, including:

- Creation of visible and accessible expert teams to support industry and academic interactions: A model for this is the [West Australian Food Innovation Precinct](#) which co-locates researchers and industry partners. Students will undertake instruction in the facility, and placements with co-located and proximally located industry partners.
- Co-location of commercial partners into a number of facilities on campus, as part of the Enabling Technologies refresh.
- Ongoing program of education to foster entrepreneurial mindsets for emerging staff and students.
- On-going review of staff KPIs and a new career framework to encourage engagement with the national innovation agenda, fostering excellence in research teaching and clinical practice.

Measures of success will include research income from industry engagement; and collaborative research publications with an industry partner.

**Open access:** The [MU research repository](#) makes research publications, including student theses, publicly available in compliance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018), requirements of funding agencies and other relevant requirements. Publications by Murdoch academics are aligned against the UN 2015-2030 SDGs.

## OFFICIAL

**Cybersecurity measures:** Murdoch actively participates in CAUDIT and as a result partners with AusCERT and AARNet, in the Australasian Higher Education Cyber Security Service (AHECS) which provides services in engagement, advocacy, advisory and support and operations. Internally, safeguards against cyber-attack include: employing a risk based approach to determining where to prioritize and place process and technical controls; centralized policy framework and report compliance metrics to leaders on a regular basis; regular security assessments on our environment to determine the effectiveness of our process and technical controls; and employing security technologies to protect our environment and maturing these controls in accordance with advice provided by the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) 'Essential 8'. A Data Breach Response Plan for Information Technology systems and data is in place.

**Foreign interference:** Mechanisms to identify foreign interference activities include cybersecurity measures, and close scrutiny of all research grants and HDR applications to identify potential for critical intellectual property or defence control implications. The University has established a Foreign Interference Steering Committee which is Chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation assisted by the Manager of University Resilience.

### IMPROVING STUDENT EQUALITY AND OUTCOMES

Murdoch's student population includes proportionally higher cohorts than sector averages of Low Socioeconomic Status (SES) students, students with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from a Non English speaking background, first in family students, students who have delayed enrolment and students aged over 25. As such, we have a strong commitment to equity and ensuring students who from groups that have been historically excluded succeed in higher education.

**Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders:** The Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, guided by the [ATSI Education and Strategy Committee](#), manages strategies to improve performance in key indicators of Aboriginal educational outcomes including access, participation, retention, completion and success. These are detailed in the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student and Education Strategy](#) as part of the University's broader commitment to [Aboriginal reconciliation](#).

**K-Track** is an award winning, 14-week enabling course designed to provide a pathway for ATSI students to qualify for entry into an undergraduate degree. The Centre also provides student support, academic coaching, study space and learning technologies to support student success. It also coordinates Indigenous tutorial assistance and learner support across all levels of study. A focus on recruitment and retention of ATSI students has seen steady growth in ATSI enrolments to achieve a level of 2% of the domestic enrolled cohort, while also increasing ATSI retention rates to equal the whole of University average. These metrics are set to be maintained or improved.

**Alternative entry programs to support low SES students:** The University is committed to increase student participation where the profile and diversity of student applicants is from non-traditional ATAR routes. This includes a range of [in-school](#), [after-school](#), [intensive pre-university](#) and [bridging courses](#) as well as an early entrance scheme, established as a [Uni Safety Net](#) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and TAFE articulations.

In school programs such as Flexi-track High and Learning for Tomorrow engage over 300 students and more than 30 schools, many of them in the Southern Corridor of Perth, allowing students not initially on an ATAR pathway to qualify for university entrance and ensure that they are well prepared for university level study. In 2022, we will trial a 'very small schools' version of FlexiTrack High allowing students from remote and regional locations to access a confirmed pathway to study at Murdoch.

In 2021, we have instituted a literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessment process called the 'Learning and Teaching Support Plan' through core first year units. Over 1800 commencing

## OFFICIAL

students have engaged with the diagnostic assessment which has assured Murdoch that the students who have entered by early offer schemes or alternative pathways have the core skills at a level commensurate with the ATAR pathway students, ensuring that all students have access to the support they need and the best chance of success.

**Student success and wellbeing:** Murdoch is committed to student success and wellbeing. We offer a range of services that focus on access, wellbeing and equity as well as student advice and student success to enhance the focus on inclusion and wellbeing. Alongside provision of direct services to students the university has implemented or is developing a range of key strategies and action plans:

- **Student Wellbeing Strategy** that takes an inclusive approach to wellbeing both on campus and in curriculum. This strategy has been reviewed by the Student Wellbeing Committee (a subordinate committee of the University Education Committee, as detailed in the [Academic Council Statement of Governance Principles](#)) and the action plan is being updated.
- **Student Success Strategy** to provide a strategic focus for internal operations on student retention and progression.
- **[Respect Now Always Action Plan](#)** to promote respectful relationships and minimise sexual harassment and sexual assault within the Murdoch community. The Plan is being finalised for publication and will be available at the linked page.
- **[SAGE Athena SWAN Action Plan](#)** to improve gender equity across Murdoch, which has included the resourcing of parenting spaces on campus to support students with young children to remain engaged with study, with future plans to develop a crèche on campus.

**OFFICIAL**

**SIGNED for and on behalf of  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

**In the presence of:**

by

Dom English

Ryan Kinder

**Full name (please print)**

**Witness (please print)**

First Assistant Secretary

A/g Director

**Position**

**Position or profession of witness (please print)**

**of the Department of Education, Skills and  
Employment as delegate of the Minister for  
Education and Youth**

**Signature**

**Signature**

28/12/2021

**Date**

**SIGNED for and on behalf of  
MURDOCH UNIVERSITY**

**In the presence of:**

by

**Professor Romy Lawson**

**Gemma Cominelli**

**Full name (please print)**

**Witness (please print)**

**Interim Vice Chancellor**

**Executive Officer**

**Position**

**Position or profession of witness (please print)**



**Signature**



**Signature**