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Australian Government

**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

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

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 University of Wollongong's (UOW) commitment to change that matters, trust built through partnerships and a regional and global outlook has shaped our priorities since our inception. Our continued success is the result of a culture that values our people, our students and our partnerships, locally, regionally and internationally.

UOW commits to increasing access, engagement and achievement by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in higher education through a range of initiatives.

Over the period of this Compact, our focus areas, outlined in our [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#) (launched in February 2020), are:

- Empowering students for their future and being renowned for innovative educational experiences that prepare students for the future of work;
- Creating knowledge for a better world and being globally recognised for delivering impactful research that drives positive change; and
- Making a difference for our communities and leveraging our unique regional perspective and transformative capabilities in the interests of society.

The three strategic goals are activated through our [Education, Research & Innovation](#) and [Civic University](#) strategies. (<https://www.uow.edu.au/about/our-vision-strategy/2020-2025-strategic-plan/>)

We measure progress towards these goals via a comprehensive planning and reporting framework comprising 12 key performance indicators and supporting metrics, annual deep dive reports and an integrated annual planning and stocktake process.

UOW is deeply committed to academic freedom, future proofing students and supporting their success, delivering impactful research to support industry and our communities, and to equity, diversity and reconciliation to promote a safe, respectful and socially inclusive society. These concepts are embedded in our Strategic Plan, institutional values and policies.

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FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

In late 2019 to early 2020 UOW conducted an internal review of the *Model Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers* (“the Model Code”) as proposed by the [Independent Review of Freedom of Speech in Australian Higher Education Providers](#) (“the French Report”).

The findings of the internal review were that UOW’s existing legal and policy framework is largely consistent with the principles proposed by the Model Code and that UOW’s legal and policy framework largely accords with the UOW community’s expectations and attitudes towards the expression of freedom of speech and academic freedom. The University implemented a number of amendments to existing UOW policies to further strengthen and promote UOW’s position regarding freedom of speech and the expression of academic freedom by students.

UOW is mostly aligned with the Model Code. Emeritus Professor Sally Walker’s review of the adoption of the Model Code, undertaken in late 2020, found that UOW was one of the 14 majority of universities with aligned policies with a small number of areas of non-alignment. Emeritus Professor Walker provided UOW with recommended actions to rectify identified areas of non-alignment, in particular through implementing a University Statement based on the Objects section of the Model Code, setting out a clear commitment by the University to provide members of staff, students and the public with clarity and confidence regarding the University’s approach to academic freedom and freedom of speech.

In December 2020 the University Council approved the Academic Freedom Statement which can be found on UOW’s website here:

<https://www.uow.edu.au/about/our-vision-strategy/academic-freedom-at-uow/>

While UOW does not have a standalone Academic Freedom / Freedom of Speech Policy, the Academic Freedom Statement sets out the policy framework through which UOW aligns with the Model Code. We will review this policy annually with a report to the University Council.

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IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

Our *2020-2025 Education Strategy* seeks to transform learning, teaching and student support at UOW in order to empower students for their future, meet workforce needs of employers, and support our communities through lifelong learning.

Our top strategic objective is to continue the digital transformation of our education provision. Last year, the success of our transition to online remote delivery in response to COVID-19 pandemic was recognised with 2020 AFR Higher Education Award. In June 2021, we launched a two-year initiative to build on this momentum by digitally enhancing 66% of our subjects.

Our top operational objective is return to campus. For Spring, we planned to deliver 80% of taught hours on campus. NSW lockdown has disrupted this plan but will pivot to on campus classes as soon as permitted.

Three other key strategic objectives under our Education Strategy to support student retention and graduate outcomes are:

- (a) Increase use of learning analytics to support student retention: measured through % of students using learning analytics.
- (b) Widen and deepen work-integrated learning (WIL): advanced through WIL rollout plan and measured via % of subjects with WIL component.
- (c) Enhance student career-preparedness: operationalised through the UOW Compass Personal Awareness Framework and measured by student self-awareness of preparedness for employment.

We have introduced new 24-hour Student Wellbeing Support Line in partnership with Lifeline Direct, and new 24/7 academic support service for students in partnership with Studioity.

Under our NPILF Plan, we aim to have 100% of new courses and course reviews co-design with Industry.

Publicly accessible links to UOW's admissions, retention and return to campus strategies:

- [Admissions information](#)
- Retention strategies: [Student Retention Tool](#), [Peer Assisted Learning \(PAL\)](#)
- [Return to campus information](#)

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Our three key priorities for 2021-2023 are:

1. Supporting Our Next generation of Research Leaders

- Provide 28 [PERL \(Prioritising Emerging Research Leaders\) Fellowships](#), including three Indigenous PERL Fellowships, to support high quality early and mid career researchers (EMCRs).
- Provide RITA (RevITALising) Research grants to support EMCRs and those whose research has been most severely COVID-impacted.
- Undertake a Research Stocktake and a Review of Research Centres. Refocus internal funding to Research Centres on the basis of excellence, integrity, impact.
- Appoint Dean of Researcher Development and Integrity to lead and implement a Researcher Development and Integrity Framework.
- Develop mechanisms for compliance with federal government foreign engagement obligations, including revised policies and processes, communications and training, a [UOW Foreign Engagements website](#), and process for staff annual Foreign Engagement Declaration.

2. Best Practise Higher Degree Research (HDR) Training and Support

- Implement 25 recommendations from 2019 external review of Graduate Research School
- Ensure HDR candidates receive best-practise training, an outstanding experience, and transferable skills in readiness for career pathways beyond academia.
- Introduce a Graduate Certificate in Research for all HDR candidates.
- Develop strategies and opportunities for HDR candidates to gain industry experience for all or part of their candidature.

3. Industry Engagement Strategies and Research Commercialisation

- Appoint Dean of Research Knowledge Exchange and Translation to lead this priority.
- Support areas of translational research excellence that address global/regional challenges.
- Develop and provide training to researchers in entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Refocus and strengthen iAccelerate to better support education and research translation.
- Invest in business development personnel to translate research outcomes into impact.

Publicly accessible links to UOW's iAccelerate program and other commercialisation examples identified:

- [iAccelerate](#)
- [iAccelerate programs](#)
- [UOW Research Commercialisation Unit](#)
- [Industry research engagement](#)

IMPROVING STUDENT EQUALITY AND OUTCOMES

Our [UOW 2020-2024 Strategic Plan](#) aims to empower students for their future and make a difference to our communities. For students from under represented backgrounds the UOW Enabling Framework for Student Equity 2021-2024 adopts a **whole student, whole journey, whole of institution** approach to facilitating access and success. Through collaborative partnerships internally and externally, and an evidence based practice model, we tailor interventions to address identified needs.

(a) tailored strategies to enhance student access, success and agency

These include:

- pre-access and access programs with over 150 partner schools (regional and/or with an ICSEA index of <1000), including those tailored for identified groups (i.e., *STEM+X*; *Koori Access Program*; *Your Future Matters*)
- Further development of curriculum embedded induction and career readiness programs to enhance student transitions into University and into employment
- [UOW Equity Scholarships](#) to address financial disadvantages
- tailored services to ensure academic success including Strengths and Needs assessments and individualised learning success plans that also enhance students holistic development under the UOW Compass Framework

(b) Tailored retention and re-engagement strategies

These include:

- Peer Programs, including Peer Assisted Learning in identified subjects and Peer Success Coaching for students at risk of withdrawing
- Mentoring and partnership to enhance Career development Learning

Key Metrics will involve analysis of students from under-represented backgrounds (i.e., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Regional and Low socioeconomic students) across the following:

- Student Participation Rates
- Domestic Attrition Rate
- Domestic Bachelor Graduate Employment Rate
- Percentage of Subjects with Learning Analytics focussed on the Online Learning Environment

Publicly accessible links to:

- [UOW's Enabling Framework for Student Equity 2021-2024](#)
- [UOW's Reconciliation Action Plan](#)

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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
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

In the presence of:

by

PATRICIA M. DAVIDSON

STACEY THOMAS

Full name (please print)

Witness (please print)

Vice-Chancellor and President

Senior Executive Assistant

Position

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature

Signature