



2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Edith Cowan 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 and Strategic Planning

The purpose, vision, strategic goals and strategic priorities of Edith Cowan University (ECU) are set down in the [ECU Strategic Plan, 2022-2026 – Towards the University of the Future](#), approved by the University’s governing Council in October 2021. In addition, eight themed supporting plans describe more detailed strategic objectives (publicly available), and their associated actions (internal only).

ECU’s purpose is to transform lives and enrich society.

ECU’s vision is to lead the sector in educational experience, research with impact, and in positive contributions to industry and communities.

Key outcomes for 2024, the third year of ECU’s current five-year Strategic Plan, include:

- maintaining a top 10 national ranking for student satisfaction with the overall educational experience (measured via the Student Experience Survey, 2023)
- maintaining research publication outputs per researcher and field weighted citation impact scores that are at or above national averages (as defined by the Strategic Plan)
- maintaining staff satisfaction at rates above national averages (measured via the Voice Survey, 2024, Passion/Engagement item)
- maintaining a top 400 ranking in the *Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings*, and a top 100 position in the *THE Young University Rankings*.

ECU reviews all its courses on a five-yearly basis as part of the [Major Course Review \(MCR\) process](#). This ensures courses continue to meet the **workforce and skills needs** of industry, as well as professional accreditation requirements of industry bodies. MCRs result in course curriculum changes, and the archiving and replacement of courses.

Student and staff safety is addressed through a range of support services. ECU's [Student and Staff Mental Health Strategy 2021-2024](#) outlines mental health actions and priorities. ECU provides health services, psychological counselling support and an out-of-hours crisis line for students, and an employee assistance program and a health and wellness program for staff. Physical safety is supported through the [Work, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2026](#), Work Health and Safety Committees, and the University's policies and processes for emergency first responses, ergonomics, incident reporting and investigation, risk management, injury management, and management of radiation, biosafety and hazardous substances.

ECU's robust [International Compliance Review](#) process ensures all foreign activities comply with international obligations, sanctions, defence trade controls, **foreign interference** and relevant reporting requirements. ECU's [Conflict of Interest](#) policy requires staff to disclose secondary employment, including foreign interests and associations. An Integrity Training Program for all staff includes foreign interference content.

ECU's **cyber and data security** approach is defined by its [Compliance, Acceptable Use of Information Systems](#), and [Critical Incident and Business Continuity Management](#) policies and procedures, consistent with Australian Cyber Security Centre guidelines. ECU participates in the [Australasian Higher Education Cybersecurity Service](#) initiative, through the Council of Australasian University Directors of Information Technology and the [Cybersecurity Community of Practice](#).

In March 2020, ECU adopted a [Statement on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech](#) outlining the University's commitment to promoting and protecting **academic freedom and freedom of speech**. As agreed by the University Chancellors Council, issues of concern related to academic freedom and reported to Council are disclosed in ECU's Annual Report, along with student and staff perceptions of freedom of expression and academic freedom, captured through surveys.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

The [ECU Strategic Plan, 2022-2026 – Towards the University of the Future](#), defines three Strategic Priorities relating to support for students from under-represented backgrounds and their communities. These are:

- **Promoting equity, diversity and excellence.** ECU will provide sector leadership in contemporary equity, diversity and inclusive practices, to widen participation and success in higher education.
- **Success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.** ECU will lead the sector in education that supports the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- **Strong regional communities.** ECU will drive improved outcomes for regional communities in Western Australia, through enhanced education and research opportunities at the South West Campus and its study hubs, and through capacity building for the workforce in the South West Region.

These Strategic Priorities are further detailed in four supporting plans, defining ECU's strategic objectives in relation to equity in higher education. These are: the [ECU Educational Experience Plan 2022-2026](#), the [ECU Equity and Inclusion Plan, 2022-2026](#), the [ECU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan, 2022-2026](#), and the [ECU Regional Plan, 2022-2026](#).

Key targets for 2024 are:

- achieving success rates for ECU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander first year students that are on par with the overall student average (as defined by the Strategic Plan)

- growing regional student enrolments through ECU South West (Bunbury) incrementally to 1,900 by 2026 (1,440 in 2023)

Students with disability will be a key focus for support in 2024. In common with other universities, ECU is seeing an increase in students accessing disability support services. A review of ECU's equity services in 2022 resulted in increased staffing and a new [Access and Inclusion team](#) that now provides contemporary and innovative approaches to equity, diversity and inclusive practices across ECU.

Success and transition rates of students in ECU's flagship Enabling program - [UniPrep](#) - have improved in recent years due to dedicated student support and peer assistance, and the proactive use of learning analytics to contact non-participating students. This will be a continuing focus in 2024.

Service level agreements with the Pilbara Kimberley University Centre and Great Southern Regional University Centre continue to provide support for regional online students in 2024. ECU's South West Campus and learning hubs in Busselton, Collie and Mandurah will continue to provide student support facilities and services to ECU students across the South West Region.

ECU leads a range of engagement activities and initiatives to address barriers and grow participation in higher education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The [Kurongkurl Katitjin student success team](#) provides individual support to current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and manages a range of education, accommodation and merit scholarships.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

ECU's teaching and learning goals are articulated in the [ECU Strategic Plan, 2022-2026 – Towards the University of the Future](#) and in [ECU's Educational Experience Plan, 2022-2026](#).

Key performance targets for 2024 are:

- maintaining a top 10 national ranking for student satisfaction with the overall educational experience (measured via the Student Experience Survey, 2023)
- improving commencing bachelor retention rates (as defined by the Strategic Plan)
- achieving graduate employment rates on par with State averages (measured via the Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2023)
- achieving success rates for ECU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander first year students that are on par with the overall student average (as defined by the Strategic Plan).

Curriculum transformation is an ECU strategic objective and a major focus for 2024. In order to respond to the changing education and skills needs of Australia and the emergence of digital disruptions such as Artificial Intelligence, a pilot program will be launched in the first half of 2024 to transition identified courses to new assessment approaches, 'active learning at scale' teaching practices, an expanded range of delivery modes, and new trimester models, leveraging new physical and digital infrastructure. The pilot will inform the whole of institution Curriculum Transformation project and is a key part of the ECU City Campus Program.

ECU's [Admissions Policy](#) and [Admission, Enrolment and Academic Progress Rules](#) provide comprehensive and clear information on admissions criteria, including pathways, English proficiency and preparation courses, as part of its **admissions transparency** obligations.

ECU's high proportion of mature-age domestic students is a significant factor impacting **retention** performance, although the shortfall against the largely static national average has narrowed in recent years, driven by a range of **early intervention** and proactive services to support **at-risk**

students. ECU's [Support for Students](#) policy and guidelines are available from the [ECU student intranet](#), providing a single access point for information on all academic support options, non-academic support options, and University Rules.

Last year ECU completed the transition to a new learning management system, which provides more nuanced insights about student engagement and learning outcomes, and better integrates with other student resources and tools.

ECU has expanded support for academic integrity, including updated training and support for students and staff. All new students are required to complete ECU's Academic Integrity Module. In addition, self-access resources have been expanded for staff and students on the use of artificial intelligence in learning and assessment.

Student labour market outcomes are monitored closely, and workforce demand data informs intake decisions and course and unit reviews, as required under ECU's [Curriculum Design Policy](#). ECU's Employability Project team will continue to embed career development learning in the curriculum and increase internship and placement opportunities with industry partners, for improved employment outcomes for graduates.

International student support is generally mainstreamed to provide consistency with student support for other student cohorts. ECU monitors and supports international student transitions to help mitigate the external challenges faced by these students, such as accommodation shortages, connections to peers and developing a sense of belonging. In addition, ECU undertakes detailed monitoring of the academic performance of students by cohort group, including international students by country and international agent, to ensure that students are capable of succeeding in their studies.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

ECU's research, research training, and innovation goals are articulated in the [ECU Strategic Plan, 2022-2026 – Towards the University of the Future](#) and in [ECU's Research Plan, 2022-2026](#). These documents set research excellence and research engagement goals and key performance targets. For 2024, these targets are:

- maintaining research publication outputs per researcher that are above national averages (as defined by the Strategic Plan)
- maintaining a Field Weighted Citation Impact Score for ECU publications that is above the national average (as defined by the Strategic Plan)
- continuing to exceed the national average annual growth rate for research grant income (as defined by the Strategic Plan)
- achieving higher degree by research completions at a rate equal to or higher than the national average (as defined by the Strategic Plan)

ECU will continue to produce high-quality research through supporting its researchers and HDR candidates. In 2024, a renewed citation strategy will guide the dissemination and production of highly quality research outputs, and a research leadership training program will enhance the capacity of ECU researchers to deliver exceptional programs of research.

In 2024, ECU will continue to focus its research to build scale in specific areas of research excellence including through support of ECU's Strategic Research Institutes and Centres – [Nutrition & Health Innovation Institute](#), [Exercise Medicine Research Institute](#), [Centre for Precision](#)

[Health](#) and [Centre for People, Place and Planet](#). Onboarding of a new cohort of Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellows in 2024 will build further focus in areas of existing strength.

ECU will continue to grow work placement opportunities for its higher degree by research candidates and provide financial support through stipends that recognise increased cost of living pressures. ECU will improve the quality of its HDR training through the implementation of new HDR Milestones, and project based HDR scholarship advertisements.

Research commercialisation is underpinned by ECU's [Intellectual Property](#) policy and is supported by ECU's Commercial and Investment Services team, which provides commercial and financial analysis on commercial new investments and research, assistance in the preparation of tender applications, evaluation and set up of alternative corporate structures, including joint ventures, and manages the establishment of and financial process requirements of subsidiary entities. The applied nature of much of ECU's research means there is expected to be limited activity in research commercialisation in 2024.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

In teaching and learning, ECU staff engage with business representatives for the purposes of developing and reviewing its courses. [Course Consultative Committees](#) and Advisory Boards include representatives from industry and the professions who advise on course design and assessment. The [Work Integrated Learning](#) policy ensures industry-relevant learning experiences are embedded in all teaching programs.

ECU's current [industry collaborations](#) connect ECU's diverse and talented students with businesses for the purposes of work placements, employment, entrepreneurships, and a range of community support activities. Innovative approaches to work-integrated learning and employability include the [IBM paid internship](#) program, a partnership with IBM established in 2022 and focusing on current and emerging high-demand skill areas key to WA's digital economy, including user experience designers, software engineers, data scientists, mobile application developers, and project managers.

In 2024, ECU will continue to embed its employability framework and increase opportunities for work-integrated learning with industry partners.

ECU continues to build partnerships with government, community and industry organisations to increase the impact of its research. A recent example of some significance is the [MARS Centre](#), a research collaboration with the mining industry funded by the WA Government.

In 2024 ECU is developing a comprehensive, institutional-level, Industry Engagement Strategy to position ECU as "*The university business can do business with*". It will provide a platform and operating model to leverage the significant opportunities to be generated through the launch of the ECU City campus in 2026. The strategy will also inform ECU's digital and physical front door and service model to industry.

ECU is in advanced discussions with a number of global companies in relation to comprehensive partnership agreements spanning talent pipeline, talent development, research, innovation and community engagement.

In 2024, ECU researchers will receive additional targeted central support to develop and apply for grants with industry, government, and community bodies. This will include support through the appointment of an Industry Engagement Officer and a Research Impact Officer to plan and facilitate engagement. ECU is a major partner in several Joint Venture Agreements linked to its research partnerships involving other WA public universities, government departments and

industry groups; through Board membership ECU contributes to governance, strategy and oversight of such partnerships.

[Defence Research and Engagement](#) will be a continuing focus in 2024. ECU is a member of the Team WA group of universities that co-ordinate and collaborate on activities to support and grow the defence research in WA. ECU's research expertise contributes to the Australian Defence Force capabilities in Cyber Security, Human Performance, Engineering and Science, and Information Warfare.

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by

Madonna Morton

Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary

Position

of the Department of Education



Signature

29/05/2024

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of
EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

by

Professor Steve Chapman

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor

Position



Signature

In the presence of:

Karen D'costa

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature