



2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and The University of Newcastle

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 [University of Newcastle's Strategic Plan 'Looking Ahead'](#) makes three over-arching commitments:

1. Be a leading advocate and driving force for excellence and equity in higher education;

Achieved: Strengthen our existing sector-leading equity programs, including enabling and undergraduate certificate pathways, and grow our Indigenous support programs through the Wollotuka Institute.

Measured: Maintain our position as a top University in the country for Indigenous, first in-family, Low-SES and regional enrolments, retention, and success.

2. Deliver an outstanding student experience, ensure our students develop life and career skills to be competitive in the workforce, and are strongly supported in their physical and mental wellbeing;

Achieved: Work Integrated Learning is now a core component of all degrees. Graduate Attributes are woven throughout curricula and extra-curricular elements of the student journey.

Measured: To be in the top 5 Universities for Satisfaction with Overall Experience in the Student Experience Survey by 2025.

3. To bring the world to our regions, and take our regions to the world through relevant research solutions to local, national and global problems;

Achieved: Four Engagement Priorities reflect issues and opportunities relevant to the future of our regions and our world, and the mission-driven issues we have the capacity, expertise and civic responsibility to address.

Measured: We will continuously increase the proportion of partner-led research to deliver real world outcomes.

Workforce and skill needs

The University is delivering universal Career-ready Placements, industry networks and a [portal](#) to facilitate placements. Work with industry and Government ensures alignment with employer, workforce and accreditation needs. The Careers and Employability Team support strategies to benefit employers, students and graduates.

Student and Staff Safety

The University has developed the [Action Plan](#) for Prevention of Sexual Harm , providing [a range of information, materials, and services](#) to students to support a safe and respectful University community. The University's Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Policy and Procedure has been re-designed to support this and highlight the University's positive duty.

Countering foreign interference

The University has developed [a range of resources, guidelines and mandatory training](#) for all staff to promote awareness of and compliance with foreign interference requirements. The University Foreign Interference Taskforce is the peak governance body overseeing implementation and compliance.

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech

The University has implemented a [Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#) that reflects the model code in full. The University has a number of other statutory and non-statutory rules, policies and guidelines which include reference to principles of:

- Academic and intellectual freedom
- [Academic and research integrity](#)
- [Conduct of students, staff and research](#)
- [Information Security](#)

Cyber and data security

Cyber security governance and teams protect staff, students, systems and data from cyber threats. The cyber program has been enhanced to align to the NIST Cyber Security Framework and the ACSC Essential Eight Strategies to Mitigate Cyber Security Incidents. The NIST framework defines both reactive and proactive controls to Identify; Protect; Detect; Respond; and Recover. The University continuously measures and matures progress against frameworks.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

1) Composing equity structures to coordinate collaboration across institution;

Achieved:

- Key roles/units facilitating equity and Indigenous-led research, evaluation, pathways, programs and services.
- Institutional structures enable collaboration across these key roles/units to ensure a whole-of-institution understanding and commitment to building equity.
- Excellence in equity across all core dimensions of education through the highest quality equity programs, practice, evaluation and research
- Clear reporting lines between institutional governing bodies for accountability.

Measured:

- Investment in roles/units to develop and sustain fit-for-purpose and research informed equity initiatives.
- Investment in roles/units to support and facilitate the collaboration of all University equity initiatives stakeholders.
- Development of specialised, equity-aligned evaluation that is participatory to ensure representation of groups impacted and that build institutionalised capacity to embed student equity.

2) Embedding equity expertise across the University through Maligagu and through building capacity in equity research, pedagogy and practice;

Achieved:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge woven into teaching, learning and research.
- Field-leading equity research influencing change by challenging intersectional inequalities.
- Building capacity for excellence in equity research, evaluation, pedagogy and practice.

Measured:

- Development of initiatives/approaches that demonstrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, relationships, cultural and community work.
- Awareness of and responsibility to what equity means in different contexts, roles, responsibilities, and programs.
- Growth in research, evaluation and innovative practice that builds student equity outcomes.

3) Responding to diverse communities in line with our Student Equity Framework;

Achieved:

- Research, evaluation and programs co-designed with otherwise underrepresented communities/students to challenge intersecting inequalities and accumulating disadvantages that prevent access, participation, and success of students from under-represented backgrounds.
- Insights gained about pathways into and through award programs via ongoing participant and educator feedback, with reviews by panels with equity expertise.
- Research led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Chief Investigators, in partnership with communities and representative organisations.

Measured:

- Field-leading equity research working in concert with practice.
- Sustained investment in pathways with evaluation provided via students and experts, comprised of practitioners and researchers.
- Valued Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community partnerships with policies and practices that embed culturally responsive ways of working.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

1) Career-ready Placements (CRP): The University's inclusive sector leading CRP course ensures *all* students graduate with a portfolio of experiences that demonstrate essential workplace skills that have built on the knowledge acquired during their degree. Our programs challenge and inspire students to acquire practical, real-world workplace skills, enriching their theoretical learning and enhancing employability.

Achieved: Our comprehensive 'Life Ready Graduates' initiative (employability strategy), incorporating a new suite of Graduate Attributes and the Career Connect program, will ensure that every undergraduate student will graduate with a meaningful work-based experience as part of their degree and an understanding of how their education links with career opportunities.

Measured: Increased proportion of students who engage in CRP based activities and improved Graduate Outcomes.

2) Student Success Strategy: outlines a comprehensive strategy to enhance student success. It includes a vision to deliver an exceptional student experience, preparing graduates for life in an interconnected society. The strategy emphasises inclusivity, support for mental and physical wellbeing, and career readiness. It integrates with the university's strategic plans, focusing on innovation in the student experience. Key components include acknowledging the diverse student body, offering flexible support systems, and leveraging data analytics for informed decision-making. The strategy aims to foster a connected, supportive, and empowered student community, with specific initiatives to enhance academic and personal development, ensuring students are industry-ready and community-oriented.

Achieved: The strategy emphasises inclusivity, support for mental and physical wellbeing, and career readiness. It integrates with the university's strategic plans, focusing on innovation in the student experience.

- a) *Flexibility in Learning Options:* By increasing online learning options and supporting diverse learning styles, the university aims to provide flexible learning pathways for students.
- b) *Leadership and Representation:* Opportunities for leadership and representation are created through programs like iLead and engagement with the University of Newcastle Student Association (UNSA), fostering student leadership skills and active engagement in university life.
- c) *Empowering Students:* Supporting students to become active decision-makers in their future, including the use of program planners and providing choices in study modes, aims to empower students to take ownership of their educational journey.

Measured: The strategy's implementation will be operationalised through the Student Retention Plan, which outlines detailed activities for achieving the strategy's goals. Three key principles underpin the delivery of the strategy:

- a) **Flexibility:** To meet the differing demands of the University of Newcastle's student cohorts.
- b) **Efficiency:** In the operationalisation of initiatives, processes, and solutions.
- c) **Agility:** To adapt the strategy in response to changing circumstances, such as external policy or regulatory shifts.

Monitoring and measurement will involve regular reports to the Teaching and Learning Committee which oversees the strategy, and providing regular reports on student retention and success to the Executive Leadership Team and Academic Senate. The university will leverage data analytics and student feedback to generate insights, inform decisions, and develop focused strategies to support student empowerment, connection, and support. This ensures that the university remains accountable and responsive to the strategy's aims and outcomes.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Research and Research Training

The University is dedicated to supporting people and capability through fostering a culture of impactful research, research training and innovation excellence. We are dedicated to developing future leaders to meet evolving regional, national, and global challenges, and supporting strategic decision-making for success and succession planning in priority areas.

Achieved:

- Supporting the growth of our people (including research students, academics, and professional staff) through targeted professional development and training programs which have been revised considering equity, diversity and inclusion principles and present-day challenges (e.g., AI developments, cyber security, foreign interference, research data storage and AUKUS).
- Developing strategic recruitment and succession plans that enhance capabilities in select areas of research focus in line with national priorities.
- Promote the University's research reputation to external stakeholders to improve institutional rankings and communication of impactful outcomes.
- Developing an institution-wide research training calendar for higher degree research (HDR) students to support skill development, including an annual dedicated HDR student conference.
- Implementing new programs and career capability pathways for HDR students to support their career development from start of candidature.
- Promoting industry engagement activities for HDR including internships and funded schemes to support engagement in research that has regional and global impact.
- Established Doctoral Training Centres around key strategic multi-disciplinary, industry-focused research areas, including resources; food & agriculture; and energy.
- Commitment to openness in animal research via the [ANZCCART Openness Agreement 2023](#).

Measured:

- Delivered new/updated professional development and training programs.
- Indigenous-led advice provided on the responsible conduct of research.
- Improved numbers of HDR students engaged in skills development and career enhancement activities.
- Provision of data-driven performance analysis to leaders for key decision making.
- Increased media engagement on stories of research impact.
- Improved University rankings.
- Improved numbers of HDR students engaged with industry.
- Increased number of applications received and funded through internal grants for 3Rs projects.
- Increased HERDC funding

Innovation and Research Commercialisation

The University is committed to research translation, including commercialisation, to deliver economic and social impact in our region and beyond. In 2023 a new senior role, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Industry and Engagement, was created to drive our strategy. This coincided with a reorganisation and reporting lines for relevant units including Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise, and Entrepreneurship.

A new research commercialisation strategy was developed in 2023 in consultation with our Colleges. In 2023, we reviewed and refreshed relevant policies to ensure alignment with our strategy including IP policy and procedures, outside work, and conflict of interest. Furthermore, a new spinout framework is currently open for consultation which aims to bring a transparent, consistent, equitable and streamlined approach to the University and inventor/founders taking equity in new spinouts to commercialise University owned IP. This coincides with the University joining Uniseed, Australia's longest running early-stage tech investor. We will continue to look for opportunities to adjust our culture and environment to maximise commercialisation outcomes.

Measures of assessment:

- New invention disclosures.
- Commercialisation revenue.
- New spinouts commercialising University owned IP including social enterprises.
- Early-stage investment secured.
- New jobs created by spinouts and startups.
- Academic participation in commercialisation training.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

The University has a long history of deep industry engagement with the Hunter and Central Coast regions. As the sole university in our region, we embrace our responsibility to innovate with industry in R&D and education/critical skills delivery. We are the national leader in generating research income from industry as a percentage of total research income. Critical elements of the industry engagement strategy include:

Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER): this best practice university-industry engagement has created a community of expertise delivering solutions for global challenges and accelerating successful commercialisation in nationally significant sectors – energy, resources, food and water. NIER offers industrial research collaboration and education including three doctoral training centres (energy, food and agribusiness, resources). NIER has 271 active industry partners with contracts valued at over \$200M, 18 research centres, 206 HDR students and hosts our ARC Centre of Excellence in Minerals Beneficiation and the Trailblazer for Recycling and Clean Energy.

I2N – Integrated Innovation Network provides pre-accelerator, accelerator, incubator, mentoring co-working services to the Hunter community. Since establishment, more than 134 teams have been incubated, \$42 million funds raised, and more than 239 jobs created, through a network of nearly 5,000 entrepreneurs.

Hunter Medical Research Institute: HMRI is the largest in regional Australia and is jointly founded by the University and the Hunter New England Local Health District (LHD). HMRI's research translates quickly and effectively into better healthcare and health outcomes in environmental health and disasters, resilient health and wellbeing, and innovation in health care. 1600 health and medical researchers are affiliated with HMRI. A new clinical trials unit targeting industry sponsored trials will launch in 2024.

John Hunter Innovation Living Lab: JHILL is a joint venture between the University, LHD and HMRI. It is a purpose-built 500sqm facility at the hospital, and adjacent to the University clinical school. It will enable clinician-led innovation, provide co-location and collaboration space for health and MedTech industry partners and activate student entrepreneurship onsite.

The University of Newcastle Research Associates: TUNRA is a wholly owned subsidiary of the University that connects external partners with researchers for consulting and contract research projects. TUNRA conducts >150 projects annually, ranging in size from \$10K to >\$2M. TUNRA's unique capabilities, solutions and services in bulk materials handling, transportation, and storage utilising ISO certified facilities are highly relevant to regional industry.

ResTech: ResTech is a joint venture between the University and Australia's largest privately owned electrical engineering company, Ampcontrol. Located on campus in a purpose-built facility, ResTech provides a test bed for new product development, providing innovative solutions to industry problems. In 2023, ResTech supervised 16 Final Year Projects and 12 Career Ready Placements.

Industry PhDs: A multi-disciplinary approach enabling students to tailor their PhD to achieve industry career aspirations. With flexible learning opportunities, career mentorship, >3 month industry internships students develop competencies and networks throughout their candidature.

Measures of assessment:

- Total industry income, and as a percentage of total research income.
- Number of Industry PhDs.
- New and repeat industry partners.
- Major bids focussed on industry engagement including CRC/P, ITRP, MRFF.
- Industry partners co located on campus.

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

The University of Newcastle

by

Professor Alex Zelinsky

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor and President

Position



Signature

In the presence of:

Shaye O'Connor

Witness (please print)

Project Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature