



## 2024 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 and Strategic Planning

Since its formation in 2013, as the only private for profit investor owned university in Australia, Torrens University has established a mission to 'Connect the world for good'. As Torrens University now enters its tenth anniversary year, a cross-organisation programme of activity has taken place in the last three months of 2023 to update and refresh its mission and strategic plan, looking towards the year 2030 and the changes needed in order to achieve revised and new goals.

The new mission is to be known as a University that builds a better world. This incorporates what it means to be a University in the changing world of work, technology and society, and incorporates our B Corporation (public benefit) priority.

The high level strategic goals of Torrens University for 2030 are:

- 50,000 students enrolled annually
- 5 thriving research centres
- 10 Alumni in significant business leadership positions
- 5,000 staff
- \$1 billion in annualised revenue

Our purpose has now been defined as 'We're here to help students learn, earn and get a better return'.

This purpose has been distilled from our initial ten-year approach of maintaining a strong focus on the employability of graduates, combined with data and insights as to the needs of our students and their greater societal drivers. An important aspect of this is our connection with industry which ensures skills and workforce relevancy.

86% of Torrens University students in 2023 were employed in full time or part time work while studying. The figures for all University students in Australia are in a similar quartile. Given students are faced with increasing cost of living pressures, we believe that over the next seven

years we must understand and adapt our learning delivery and processes to an environment that will require students to be learning while working.

Our staff and student journey is also underpinned by strong principles of safety and freedom. These are enshrined in policies, principles and processes in place, covering Academic Freedom, Health and Safety, Respect and Safety, as well as frequent updates on mitigating cyber and data security risks. These include:

- 1) **Workforce and skill needs:** Robust annual staff performance review process focused on progress towards metrics over time, training and development, and success behaviours. In addition, our we have a specific team dedicated to designing, developing and launching employee tools, learning programs and initiatives to build organisational capability and employee performance in line with our strategic goals.
- 2) **Student and staff safety:** Health & safety policies and guidelines that are aimed at supporting our commitment to ensuring the health and safety of workers, students and others involved in, or affected by, our activities.
- 3) **Countering foreign interference:** Policies to ensure compliance with the responsibilities under Australian legislation and guidelines concerning universities and foreign interference.
- 4) **Cyber and data security:** Policies, proactive monitoring, and staff training in place to minimise risk.
- 5) **Upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom:** Comprehensive policy and principles to ensure that the freedom of lawful speech (both staff and students) and academic freedom is treated as a paramount value and is not restricted in any way.

## Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

At Torrens University, our mission is to be known as the University that builds a better world. As such, impact is woven into everything we do, including expanding access and improving equality in Higher Education. Torrens University excels in increasing participation and support for students from under-represented backgrounds.

Key priorities to accomplish this include:

1. Increasing participation of all under-represented groups in both staff and students as outlined in our Be Good plan. This includes training for staff, and student support for students from under-represented backgrounds.
2. Improving retention, progression and increase pathways of under-represented student groups. This also includes improving QILT & NPS by +5 p.p, which we consider a key mark of student success
3. Maintaining B Corp certification demonstrating the University's operations consider social impacts

Torrens University is embedding a robust and broad strategy to increase the enrolment and graduation of students from diverse backgrounds. Key elements are:

### ***Strategies for improving Indigenous outcomes and related targets:***

- Academic Governance Board inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- Increased recruitment, retention and promotion of Indigenous staff, and recruitment, retention and completion of indigenous students:

- Establishment of an Aboriginal and Torrens Strait Islander Engagement strategy focused on 5 key pillars of success: Teaching and Learning, Student support and success, community and engagement, and staff cultural competencies.
- Implementation of the Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (approved 2022) and Indigenous Advisory Committee;
- Inclusion of Indigenous training in Learning and Teaching symposiums and other staff training events throughout the year
- Enhance existing scholarship program and partnering with other organisations to advocate and increase participation of Indigenous students
- Inclusion of Indigenous content in courses
- Improved support through specialised Indigenous Student Readiness and Success Coaches

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

- Flexible range of entry pathways to ensure no students are discouraged from applying nor being discriminated against by admissions processes
- Learning and Teaching approach designed to offer a personalised and inclusive student ecosystem that supports diversity and promotes student success
- Students access support services including targeted support for students
- Processes for academic staff to provide support to students are developed and effectively promulgated
- Torrens University Accessibility Policy (previously known as Disability Policy) updated to reflect current legislation addressing disability and inclusivity.
- Awareness training and professional development support for staff
- Ongoing Steering Committees and working groups for LGBTQIA+ and other special interest groups
- Inclusion of Accessibility, First Nations, and LGBTQIA+ pages on Student Hub, including support services, training, and other resources
- Diversity & Inclusion Policy reviewed and amended to embrace gender neutral terminology and inclusivity
- Ongoing review/development of equity and equality topics in curriculum, addressing matters of equity for staff and students identifying in various under-represented groups

In 2023 – Torrens University was recertified as a Certified B Corporation for three years, demonstrating it’s commitment to high standards of social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability.

More information on Torrens University’s Impact can be seen here:

<https://www.torrens.edu.au/our-impact/be-good>

## Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

### KEY TEACHING AND LEARNING PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES:

Torrens' Learning and Teaching Plan 2024-2025 provides a focus for our provision of outstanding teaching, learning, student experience, engagement and support. Key priorities in The Plan include:

#### **1. Advancing scholarship and scholarly practice.**

Torrens has been progressing scholarship and scholarly practice within disciplines and Verticals (faculties) as well as through a central team resourced to design and deliver scholarship initiatives. In 2024, a systematic evidence-based approach to shared understanding, advancement and evidencing of scholarship and scholarly activity is being formalised. Scholarship and academic professional development initiatives will continue. A fit for purpose technology solution to record scholarship and flag gaps in continuing professional development currency is in the process of being designed and implemented across the institution.

#### **2. Expanding opportunities to equip students for the future world of work, graduate success and employability**

Torrens University will continue to utilise evidence from labour market sources, course reviews and industry insights to inform and embed the explicit development of relevant employability skills in courses. Torrens will continue to expand and scaffold the embedding of work integrated learning across core subjects in all courses. In 2024, there will be an emphasis on expanding our engagement with industry to review and design authentic curriculum and industry-relevant assessment tasks. Torrens is also exploring opportunities to design and deliver in partnership targeted micro-credentials that address industry skills gaps.

#### **3. Progressing personalisation, learning engagement and student experience.**

Torrens will introduce a HyFlex delivery mode in 2024 which will enhance the flexibility of options for students to decide on their mode of participation. There will be ongoing development of the institutional quality improvement processes. A new learning management system is in the process of being implemented with professional development provided to support staff in maximising the impact and the quality learning of the students. An institutional strategy is being developed to guide Torrens staff in the effective use and integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in learning and teaching.

### EARLY INTERVENTION AND HIGH-QUALITY SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Torrens continues its process to improve the Student Support Ecosystem that supports diversity and promotes student success. This will be achieved through:

1. The further refinement of policy and procedures for student support. Student retention and progression will be measured and reports monitored for presentation to governance committees.
2. As part of the new national focus on Student Support, Torrens is taking a critical look at the learning ecosystem in the institution. This includes a focused first-time enrolment program that commenced in 2023
3. The continued development of a comprehensive tiered student support service approach. This includes:
  - 24/7 self-help services and resources,
  - peer to peer and peer led services,
  - proactive outreach to students based on student data and insights,
  - tailored support services for students with complex needs or circumstances.

Retention and progression across all student demographic cohorts is analysed and monitored as a means of measuring the success of the implemented Student Support Ecosystem

## Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

### RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Informed by the Torrens University Australia Strategic Research Plan (2021-2025) the four strategic priorities are:

1. *Research Matters and quality outputs*: Maintain world class research in our targeted Field of Research codes; our 2024 focus is on developing a plan for further growth and sustainability of research portfolios
2. *Researchers Matters and Research Talent*: Invest in the development of and attracting staff to ensure high quality research performance; our 2024 focus will be on a postdoctoral research program to support our targeted FoR codes
3. *Reputation Matters*: Develop strategic collaboration relationships with industry, community, professional bodies, government and other stakeholders; our focus in 2024 will be on engagement with our international partners
4. *Real World Impact Matters*: Deliver impactful interdisciplinary research for new knowledge and translation aligned to research themes of local and global significance; our 2024 focus is on strategic partnerships for reciprocal knowledge transfer.

### KEY PRIORITIES 2024 MEASURES:

1. World class research:
  - Increase annual output of high-quality publications by 10%
  - Increase publication citation rates by 10% in targeted FoR code
  - Increase international collaboration to 65% or greater in targeted FoR code
2. Research capability and capacity
  - Establish a research fellowship program; recruit five new ECRs aligned to targeted FoR codes
  - Increase HDR student enrolment by 10%
  - Exceed 85% progression rate in research training courses
  - Increase student and staff participation in EPIGEUM modules
  - Graduate 10 HDR students
  - Increase research management support; recruit a Research Centre Coordinator(s)
  - Develop and measure staff against a Research Engagement Framework
3. Collaboration and partnerships
  - Increase our external income by 10%
  - Establish a University Centre of Excellence in 'International Studies'
  - Review our Research Partnership strategy
4. Research engagement, knowledge transfer and commercialisation
  - Establish training for engagement and knowledge transfer activities
  - Stage Research and Innovation Week and profile our strategic research partnerships
  - Increase our internal investment for research commercialisation

### INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMERCIALISATIONS

Torrens focusses on high quality reciprocal Universities, Research Institutes, professional associations, government agencies and Industry partnerships in undertaking projects nationally and internationally. We implement and monitor a wide range of dissemination and communication strategies to share research outcomes, and to encourage applied or translational research. We have developed training for research commercialisation with our HDR students and have increased our research partnerships by more than 200% since 2019.

## Strategies for Engaging with Industry

A refreshed Industry Engagement Strategy has been created, with a goal of establishing Torrens University being seen as “Industry’s University”, to ensure Torrens becomes established and known by relevant industry as being the easiest to deal with, the best at listening and the best at being able to execute on joint plans that create impact.

The key areas of this strategy are:

- Student Engagement and Work Integrated Learning
- Co design of new curriculum
- Strategic relationships and Research
- Potential for Employee workforce development (B2B2C)

### a) Student Engagement and Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

The focus is to provide activities that are relevant to the major fields of study being provided. For the Design and Creative Technology Vertical (Faculty), emphasis is placed on obtaining live industry projects and industry engagement/speaker series/thought leadership events.

For the Business and Hospitality Vertical, emphasis is on the strong WIL requirements of the Hospitality programmes and for Business the additional resource of the Social Enterprise Hub.

For Health and Education, the emphasis is on large scale WIL placements as required by various Industry Associations and accreditations, such as ACA, AARPN, CDNM etc. Health also operates a clinic called The Practice, providing health services for students by faculty supervised students.

### b) Co-designed new curriculum

All new curriculum developed by Torrens University must have active industry involvement and consultation throughout the design, implementation and review stages. As an example, with our focus of supporting digital distribution, the 2022 developed activity in the field of Cybersecurity actively engaged global leaders Palo Alto Networks and Fortinet in the design and build of the programmes, and thereafter, in the promotion of them. In December 2023, Fortinet with the American Chamber of Commerce promoted the Torrens Graduate Certificate in Cybersecurity to help business leaders become more cyber-risk aware.

### c) Strategic Relationships and Research

The strategy is to develop high quality strategic relationships with a small number of key industry partners - focussing on quality of engagement, rather than the number of partnerships. This will be a continued area of investment and upgrading of resource towards 2030. Current partners include Vogue, IBM, Hilton Hotels, Marriott International, Microsoft, Canva, Sony Playstation, SAS and Flight Centre.

### d) Potential for Employee workforce development

A strategy, working towards 2030, is to establish and resource a focus on providing training and development to employees of medium-large organisations. This is already underway with Torrens now providing pathways for Telstra, Flight Centre, TFE Hotels, AFLPA, Penrith Panthers and PGA (Professional Golf Australia) members or employees in Australia to obtain further training or formal qualifications.

SIGNED for and on behalf of  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by

Madonna Morton

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Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary

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Position

of the Department of Education



Signature

29/05/2024

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Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of  
Torrens University Australia Ltd

by

Professor Alwyn Louw

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Full name (please print)

Vice Chancellor

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Position



Signature

In the presence of:

**Lisa Smith**

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Witness (please print)

**Executive Assistant**

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Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature