



2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and University of New England

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 New England's (UNE) [2021-2030 Strategic Plan](#) outlines three overarching goals:

- To provide personalised learning journeys for our students which are distinctive in their accessibility and flexibility;
- To empower our communities by creating and sharing knowledge to make a difference locally, regionally and globally; and
- To build resilience by committing to environmental, social and financial resilience for the University, our staff, our students and our communities.

Progress towards each goal is monitored against a series of key result areas which track the long-term performance and health of the organisation. Performance is benchmarked against the sector and comparator group norms. However, UNE's unique student cohort – most of whom are online and part-time means that comparison is not straight forward. This information is reviewed on a regular basis throughout the year. During 2024, this information will be made available via a dashboard.

[The 2024-27 Business Plan](#) sets an agenda which focuses the immediate attention of the university on four critical priorities which encompass and support the delivery of the strategic initiatives articulated in Future Fit for the duration of this compact. The four critical priorities for 2024-25 are:

- Increasing student enrolments and improving retention
- Staff satisfaction and safety at work
- Meeting our critical regulatory and compliance obligations
- Managing risk in our critical infrastructure.

The Business Plan is set in the context of a planning, performance and risk management framework and will be reviewed and refreshed annually in light of performance and environmental changes.

In relation to national and sector priorities, UNE ensures that these are a core component of the way in which we deliver education and undertake research. For information on specific sector-wide issues, the following links provide detailed information in relation to how UNE addresses these in its policy framework:

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Support Policy](#)
- [Sexual Harm and Harassment Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Foreign Interference and transparency in foreign relations](#)
- Cyber and Data security ([Information Security Rule](#) , [Research Data Management Policy](#) and [Privacy Management Rule](#))
- [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Statement](#)
- [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy](#)

These policies are reviewed as part of UNE's standard governance and quality assurance processes.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

UNE was founded with a distinct mission and vision to serve the population of regional Australia, and in particular those who would not otherwise have the privilege of attending University. We remain true to that mission today by providing appropriate support to our diverse co-hort. UNE's commitment to student outcomes begins with admissions and course advising, as outlined in our [Admissions, Credit and Enrolment Policy](#). Our processes are equitable and transparent, and student focused to ensure that students are provided with appropriate advice in relation to their course of study prior to commencement and throughout the enrolment process. In 2024, we are actively looking to further optimise this process based on student feedback.

Once students have commenced with UNE, there are a range of [supports and initiatives](#) in place to ensure that those who need support are quickly identified and proactively supported. This includes:

- Support for appropriate course and unit choice, and study load
- Early identification of vulnerable students
- Early, intensive and continuous intervention, both in relation to curriculum and academic skills and pastoral care
- Options to Supplement student supports provided by UNE with partnerships with external service providers, such as industry specific career support and alumni mentors.

In relation to improving opportunity of access and success for Indigenous Australians, UNE has the following targets over the 2024-25 period:

- 2024: increase Indigenous enrolments by 1% on 2023 baseline (959 in 2023 to 969 in 2024)
- 2025: increase Indigenous enrolments by 1.5% on 2023 baseline (959 in 2023 to 997 in 2025)

These targets are supported by UNE's Indigenous Education Strategy. UNE's [Oorala Aboriginal Centre](#) is a hub for supporting First Nations success. The percentage of UNE students who identify as Indigenous is greater than the sector average.

Over the course of 2024-25 UNE will continue to work towards improving support for regional students through a range of longer-term initiatives including:

- UNE Tamworth new campus development – to improve the low rate of higher education attainment in Tamworth.
- Uplift of the Armidale student residential system to provide access to accommodation for regional students who may not otherwise be able to afford to attend university.

Further details are provided as part of UNE's Equity plan required under the Higher Education Continuity Guarantee. UNE has a range of activities underway as part of its HEPPP program.

UNE's comprehensive [Teaching and Learning Plan 2023-2030](#) outlines a range strategies for improving teaching and learning outcomes across the four following domains:

- The student experiences
- A connected curriculum
- Place-based education and partnerships
- Scholarship, reward and recognition

Over the course of 2024-5 there are a number of activities aimed at uplifting the quality of teaching and learning at UNE. [UNE's Student Support Plan](#) articulates how student success is framed and what strategies and initiatives are aligned to supporting student success. These strategies draw on the Simpson (2005) model and are adapted to UNE's context. Specifically, UNE is deploying strategies around: course advising, early identification and support for vulnerable students (focused on student support services), early, intensive and continuous intervention and internal and external support for specialist areas.

The student support plan is translated into the [student support policy](#) and underpinned by strategies around improving student engagement in curriculum. Key to improving student engagement is the full roll-out of Atrium – a triage system which allows teaching staff to identify, in real time, student engagement through the consolidation of data from multiple enterprise systems with which our students interact. This allows for staff to identify which students are struggling to engage with their studies and then prompts staff to contact the students.

UNE's Student Retention and Engagement Plan provides a detailed overview of the strategies and interventions that the university is undertaking to boost student success and outcomes and is aligned with the student support plan. There is a focus on early identification of, and intervention with, students who are deemed at risk of failure. Lead indicators provide the opportunity to identify problems and adjust early, before the student incurs costs and academic penalties and before the student makes the decision to discontinue. In 2024 and 2025 these are:

3% increase in unit success

2% decrease in pre-census withdrawal

1% decrease in post-census withdrawal

2% increase in trimester-to-trimester progression for at-risk cohorts

1% increase in trimester-to-trimester progression rates for all learners

2% increase in unit completions for HEPPP cohorts

2% increase in international student satisfaction

These targets are included in UNE's 2024-27 Business Plan and are tracked at appropriate times throughout the year. By 2026, UNE has a target of improved retention by 2% and a decrease in attrition of 2%.

Scholarship is fostered through Academic Development (AD) initiatives for staff enhancement. In 2024, UNE has prioritised two key objectives:

- Launching the Advance HE Fellowship program, wherein interested academics receive support in navigating, crafting, and pre-application review of their submissions. UNE aims to secure 15-20 fellowships this year, with a planned 10% increase annually.
- Implementing a structured Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) process to promote excellence in teaching and foster collaborative endeavours among colleagues, emphasising the demonstration of exemplary practices.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Research excellence is an outcome of the Universities strategic plan and vision to empower our communities locally, globally and regionally. In 2024, UNE will release its Research Engagement and Enterprise plan which outlines a five-year program of acceleration for UNE’s research portfolio. The plan focused on 5 thematic areas:

- Flagships and priorities
- Grants, infrastructure and capacity
- Research culture, performance, training and recognition
- IP systems, tools and industry networks
- Engagement and outreach, locally, nationally and globally

Much of the work outlined in the plan has commenced. In relation to research training, UNE’s Graduate Research School provides support across the institution for a world class higher degree experience. Specific initiatives and targets for research training in 2024-25 include:

Initiative	Target/outcome 2024
Enhanced training for HDRs and their supervisors to provide highest quality HDR experiences	8 new compulsory research and research training modules.
Improve high-weighted HDR completions. <u>Current state:</u> 90 HDR completions in 2023, of which 51 were in high-cost Fields of Research (FoR), 0 were Indigenous, 0 were recorded as having eligible research internships.	Increase high-cost FoR completions, Indigenous completions, research internship completions by 5 (~10%). Form Industry Advisory Group and introduce industry-linked research internship program. Increase research operating support for projects in high-cost FoR.
Increase domestic HDR enrolment. 2024 recruitment strategies target high-achieving UNE graduates, strategic research projects, and remote domestic candidates, offering stipends 10% above RTP base rate. <u>Current state:</u> 40 RTP Domestic Scholarships in 2023	44 RTP Domestic Scholarships (10% increase)

Over the course of 2024-25 UNE will also release its Indigenous Research Strategy, currently in development in consultation with our local First Nations community representatives. UNE aims to ensure that this consultation and co-creation is respectful of protocols and practices in relation to the sharing of Indigenous knowledges and as such we are committed to taking the time needed to ensure that any strategy put in place at UNE reflects the self-determination of our First Nations communities.

Work is under way to revise UNE’s intellectual property policies, procedures and establish enabling IP policy & Frameworks. A new [Indigenous knowledge asset and intellectual property policy](#) will also be developed and align with the Indigenous Research Strategy in development with Indigenous stakeholders at UNE.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

As part of UNE's Research Enterprise and Engagement Plan UNE will develop a series of research flagships to continue to enhance its existing relationships with industry as a model by which it will forge new relationships with emerging industries.

UNE 's priority areas for engagement include:

- One Health Rural will be a vehicle with which UNE can develop and take forward innovative cross disciplinary research and development opportunities at the nexus of human health, agriculture and environment, addressing challenges such as zoonotic disease and climate extremes impacts on mental health.
- Sustainable Agriculture Environment and Tech - will develop projects that can draw on the various UNE advantages including deep expertise in environmental science, agriculture, technology, business, and leverage the landholdings and farms assets on our campus.
- Digital Futures - deploying new digital technologies in the human and cultural domain opens up a world of new opportunities for studying and analysing objects and interactions and humanities that are currently not feasible. Smaller, remote community members will be in a position to be involved in new knowledge development in a way that was previously unimaginable.
- Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) and emissions reduction (led by UNE's Smart Regions Incubator)

Flagships bring together interdisciplinary teams for complex modern problems, and are a vehicle to engage with the end-users of research: industry and community. Each flagship will involve staff working from across all faculties at UNE, and will draw on research, innovation, stakeholder partners, teaching and learning efforts through initiatives specific to the domain. Flagships will develop connections with end-users to ensure the direction of effort and new knowledge will be well designed, fit for purpose and impactful.

In relation to UNE's course offerings, [course advisory boards](#) ensure that there is an ongoing engagement with industry as a component of UNE's academic quality assurance cycle.

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 New England

by

Christopher J Moran

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor & CEO, UNE

Position



Christopher J Moran (May 7, 2024 11:57 GMT+10)

Signature

In the presence of:

Not required when digitally signed

Witness (please print)

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature