



2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Western Sydney University

Purpose

This compact is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the University. Entering 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 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

Western Sydney University's strategic plan [Sustaining Success 2021-2026](#) states a clear mission for the University to ensure its students succeed, its research has impact, and its communities thrive. The University remains deeply committed to serving the region of Western Sydney, whilst it engages more deeply internationally, through its research impact and education delivery. The principles of Sustainability, Equity, Transformation and Connectedness underpin our plan and activities.

[Sustaining Success 2021-2026](#) includes the key performance measures used by the Board of Trustees to track the University's performance. These are monitored quarterly by the Board of Trustees through Deep Dives into each group of measures to explore trends and review progress.

2024 is the third year of the University's five year \$85M Transformation Program, designed to progress the priorities of *Sustaining Success*. These priorities include expanding our Transnational Education footprint which will see a new campus open in Surabaya, Indonesia in September 2024; enhancing student experience through focussed development of teaching staff; expansion of our microcredential suite in partnership with industry; support of innovation and venture-making for staff, students and industry in our regions; and a renewal of our pathway programs to increase support for students who face educational disadvantage. These are underpinned by a significant digital (and cybersecurity) uplift to create the digital infrastructure to allow for innovation and growth.

The University is also responding to key sectoral and regional needs with the next tranche of ongoing academic staff to be recruited to meet the University's commitment to reducing reliance on casual employment, resulting in 150 new positions over the term of the current Enterprise Agreement.

We will implement the new Support for Students policy in line with legislative requirements to ensure our students have the best opportunity for success and that focus will remain on student wellbeing and safety, including freedom from [sexual harassment](#) and sexual violence.

A significant commitment in 2024 will be the opening of Fairfield Connect to provide the people of Fairfield access to education and innovation support in their own community. This will be the first outer metro study hub with other higher education providers joining us in our commitment to the people of Western Sydney.

Considering the release of the Australian Universities Accord, and recognising the significant developments in technology, industry needs and community expectations over the past three years, the University will review its strategic plan this year. The strategic review will capitalise on a decade of place-making and community partnerships through new vectors of engagement, including, Fairfield Connect, and strengthening industry co-investment. The University will continue to support the diversity of the region, its strengths, and challenges and will ensure it can grow with the region through timely and personalised education and support, as well as continuing its commitment to being a global leader in Sustainability.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

The University's Commonwealth-supported enrolments are forecast to exceed its MBGA allocation in both 2024 and 2025. The University has, therefore, not submitted a HECG Equity Plan, but is prepared to do so should its forecast change between the submission of this Compact and October 2024.

The University's commitment to equity for students and staff is outlined in its strategic plan, [Sustaining Success](#). Sustaining Success provides four areas of equity activity: recognition; diversity; support; and intercultural competency. These domains guide the activities outlined below and are subject to monitoring by the University's Board and senior executive. Specific reporting measures include the proportion/number of Indigenous students, retention and graduate employability.

Western Sydney University has higher than sector average participation rates from first in family, low SES, Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander, and refugee and asylum seeker cohorts.

30% of the University's students come from a low socio-economic background: the sector average is 17%-18%. Over 2% of students identify as Indigenous Australian, approximately 5% have a disability, and over half of the students are the first in their family to attend University.

While the region's diversity is a strength, access to tertiary education is a challenge for its students. The proportion of students completing year 12 or equivalent is lower in western Sydney (59%) compared to the rest of Sydney (64.5%) (ABS 2021). In 2021 4.9% of the western Sydney population were attending University, compared to 5.5% in the rest of Sydney. Consequently, access to tertiary education is the focus of the University's equity activity, with a suite of mature, high-performing programs targeting equity groups.

A summary of the University's access programs is provided in the table below.

Program	Target equity group	Number of Partner Schools	Student Numbers
Fast Forward	Low socio-economic students Years 9-12	91	~7,000
Pasifika Achievement to Higher Education	Pacific Islander high school students Years 7-12	42	~2,000
New and Emerging Communities	Refugee and asylum seeker students	6 8 Community Partners	~150
Pathways To Dreaming	Indigenous Australian students Years 7-12	60	~4,000
First Foot Forward	Low socio-economic students Years 5-6	68	~7,000
Heartbeat	Indigenous Australian students Years 3-6	30	~1,800

Evidence shows that access activities have a positive effect on retention and progression. While our students from low socio-economic backgrounds have a slightly lower retention rate than the overall undergraduate population – between 1.1% and 0.4% – students who participate in Fast Forward, the University’s largest pre-access high school program, are retained at a higher rate than the rest of the low socio-economic student population at between 4.4% and 9% each year.

The University’s access programs cover the majority of Western Sydney’s primary and secondary schooling providers. The University expects growth opportunity within Indigenous access programs as support for Indigenous students increases through the University’s Indigenous Centre of Excellence. Similarly, the University’s Fairfield study hub - Fairfield Connect - commences activity in March 2024 and will platform non-school leaver engagement, potentially increasing connections with a group not served by existing programs.

While access is our equity priority, the University offers comprehensive peer-assisted programs to support retention and success. [Western Success](#) provides one-to-one advisors who provide information and advice based on students’ individual needs. Student outcomes for the 8,600 students participating in Western Success include a 5-point increase in retention for domestic students. [PASS](#) (Peer Assisted Study Sessions) delivers support sessions to 5,000 to 6,000 students, with over 200 facilitators delivering more than 200 sessions and approximately 20,000 contact hours each year. The [MATES](#) (Mentoring and Transition Equals Success) program sees over 100 mentors delivering 800 sessions throughout the year, building connection, and belonging among students through community activities.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

Western Sydney University adopts a student-centred approach to learning and teaching, outlined in [Sustaining Success 2021-2026](#) and [Education Futures Strategy 2022-2026](#). For 2024, we will build on our existing strategic framework, focusing on learning and teaching culture, employability, retention and student success.

Learning and Teaching Culture

The University seeks sustained transformation of its teaching practices in meaningful and visible ways that enhance student experience and outcomes. Through our [Engaged Teaching Project](#), we will redesign the classroom experience to improve learner engagement and overall student satisfaction, initially focusing on large first year subjects with lower satisfaction and retention. Detailed analysis of SES qualitative responses will help shape more collaborative delivery models, create more engaged learning experiences, and improve success and retention. Our effectiveness will be measured through pilot evaluation and analysis of student feedback data. From there, we will scale up for broader institutional rollout, with new classroom resources and professional development for all teaching staff.

Employability

The University places emphasis on ensuring graduates have a quality learning and teaching experience that facilitates graduate success. For 2024, we will create an integrated employability framework, promoting employability as a shared responsibility across our community. It will leverage existing initiatives, including:

- Embedding Work Integrated Learning in curriculum,
- Readily available [employability and careers](#) support,
- Industry engagement through our [Partnership Pedagogy](#) approach,
- Collaborating with VET providers on pathways and microcredentials.

Employability and careers support is provided through [Western Edge](#), an online platform for personal and professional opportunities and skills development. Through interactive tools accommodating a variety of learning approaches, Western Edge supports industry-relevant skills outcomes.

The employability framework will enhance equity by promoting a program-level approach to mapping, embedding career and professional literacy in the curriculum, and ensuring the development of broad workplace knowledge and skills at all levels of study. It will also promote a program-level approach to the design and delivery of learning activities and assessment practices grounded in authentic work contexts. This work will be accompanied by improved promotion of graduate career pathways and alumni experiences. Progress will be measured through the finalisation of the employability framework and improvements in the outcomes of future GOS and GOS-L surveys.

Retention and Student Success (Support for Students)

The University's holistic approach to student success starts from our commitment to [admissions transparency](#) through to our [Transition and Retention Strategy](#). Priority is placed, providing proactive support to at-risk students. As outlined in our [Support for Students Policy](#), the University provides a wide range of [student support services](#) including dedicated [international student support](#), academic and non-academic support services. Additionally, our [Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) outlines our commitment to student wellbeing and health promotion.

For 2024, our focus is on strengthening academic literacy and numeracy support, underpinned by our [Academic Literacy Strategy](#). We will also prioritise visibility and integration of academic and non-academic support services across the organisation. Our Engaged Teaching Project will deliver improved resources for academic staff to assist in supporting student transition, engagement, and belonging in the classroom. Effectiveness will be measured through student feedback and retention data, aiming for continuous improvement.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Western Sydney University has a strong focus on outward-facing research and sustained research excellence. We are an established partner of choice for industry, government and communities. Through these partnerships we optimise translation, drive innovation and entrepreneurship, and maximize international research opportunities. We have established mechanisms and structures that break down disciplinary boundaries with industry and government to deliver innovation and tackle intractable challenges. Cross disciplinary, challenge centric [research centres and institutes](#), which include industry and research end-users from the point of research inception, enable a convergence of strength that optimises translation and contributes to impactful economic, social and environmental change.

Identified Priorities are:

1. Creating collaborations that apply our research to real-world problems, that drive innovation and entrepreneurship, and maximise international partnerships for impactful economic, social and environmental change. Research at Western Sydney University is driven by a powerful desire to see research not just inform, but transform: to tackle pressing challenges, improve lives, and shape a better future for all.
2. In collaboration with our partners, be at the forefront of transformation for the region by contributing to health and wellbeing, building a more just society, fuelling economic growth, and assisting in the realisation of Western Sydney's potential.
3. Positioning the region as a 'Innovation Destination' by seizing emerging and future opportunities and growth potential through precinct activities, our international partnerships, researcher and student entrepreneurship, start-up acceleration, growing the innovation economy and building the innovation ecosystem while establishing Western as a leading entrepreneurship focused institution.

4. Forging new, and extending existing research alliances, building Western's reputation as a research partner of choice for existing and new international collaborators. Investing in offshore activities and hubs to support innovation, entrepreneurship. These broad international strategies will drive the delivery of innovative education models in overseas markets. Our commitment to the [United Nations Sustainability Development Goals](#) are core to Western's international research and reputation.
5. Promoting regional economic growth through innovation and entrepreneurship, ensuring fair and sustainable distribution of benefits which unlock Western Sydney's innovation and entrepreneurship potential.
6. Fostering the excellence of our researchers and research supervisors while ensuring equitable career opportunities by equipping them to realise their bold research ambitions through [Western's Researcher Development Framework](#) and [Researcher Development Awards](#).
7. Focusing on delivering research training that equips our graduates for their future careers whilst supporting their wellbeing and enabling them to thrive and reach their full potentials. Supported by our [Graduate Research School](#), both domestics and international research students will have access to our research community and our precincts.
8. Focusing on growing the number of Western Sydney University research students supported by industry co-funding. Opportunities will be provided to enable research students to undertake internships as part of the Western Sydney University [Industry PhD experience](#) in association with programs such as that of the National Industry PhD Program, CSIRO's Industry PhD Program and the Australian Postgraduate Research Intern (APR.Intern) scheme.

Measures and targets for these priorities are specified in Appendix 2 of [Sustaining Success 2021-2026 \(M1 – M10\)](#)

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

Western Sydney University has a vision for an innovation driven future for Western Sydney underpinned by rich, deep engagement with industry locally and globally. This vision includes a clear roadmap for how the University can play its role as a locally embedded institution, advocate, and partner with industry.

Continuous engagement with industry supports the building of a nurturing environment for creativity and entrepreneurship across the region. The University is developing an ecosystem where the inputs to innovation are abundant and a culture of collaboration and problem solving between the University and industry maximises opportunities to translate and commercialise world leading research in Australia. potential.

We work across the spectrum of industry sectors and size including Startup companies, SMEs and large organisations. Western Sydney University's strong focus on equity and inclusion supports firms at all stages of maturity to build their workforce with a special emphasis on the inclusion of women, culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD), and Indigenous people.

By working with industry to create new opportunities for professional training and re-skilling and up-skilling through targeted micro-credentials, the University is partnering to drive the region with an innovation ready workforce poised to capitalise on the opportunities presented through major project and infrastructure investments.

To leverage these major investments and opportunities such as the Aerotropolis which will contain the Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility (AMRF), Western Sydney University is developing key sector strategies in areas such as aerospace and defence. This will include working in partnership with primes and SME'S to maximise opportunities for R&D available through funding programs such as the Industry Growth Program and the Australian Economic Accelerator.

The University is also formulating a strategy to pursue development of "Future Technologies" as a key driver of technical development in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), Cyber Security, Blockchain and immersive experiences. With strong engagement in the AUKUS program through various forums, the University will pursue a range of Future Technology opportunities that can position the Western Sydney region as a key resource for AUKUS moving forward.

Key strategic objectives through engaging with industry

Through its industry engagement approach, the University is supporting the Western Sydney region to emerge as one of Australia's leading regions for the creation of new businesses, products and service with a focus on key objectives;

Value adding – Priority sectors for Western Sydney such as advanced manufacturing, Agri-tech, Med-tech and sustainability and circular economy will drive optimised levels of technology and innovation focused industry development.

Knowledge job creation – Providing suitable training opportunities to build capability and capacity in these firms quickly will be critical to meet their workforce needs and realise their job creation

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
WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

by

Professor Clare Pollock

Full name (please print)

Interim Vice-Chancellor and President

Position



Signature

In the presence of:

Rosaline Reakes

Witness (please print)

Principal Executive Assistant

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature