Australian Government

Department of Education

2019 Mission Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Southern Cross 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

Southern Cross University's Strategic Plan; *The New Southern Cross 2020-2026* outlines the university's primary focus over the term of this compact. Our aspiration is to nearly double in size and to become firmly established amongst the top 50 young universities in the world by 2026; achieving a scale and recognition of excellence that is essential not only to the University's sustainability, but also to its commitment to creating a better future through research and education. The New Southern Cross embodies our absolute commitment to recognise our people, our region, and our public purpose. It reflects our regional role as an engine of economic growth, a catalyst for industrial productivity and a vital civic anchor for community resilience.

The Strategic Plan is currently in print production and will be made publically available on the University's website by end November 2019. In the interim, a *Not-for-Distribution* copy of the Strategic Plan is appended to this Compact.

The University has determined to adapt the French Review's *Model Code*. In May 2019, the University undertook an external review of its founding legislation, policies, procedures, and Enterprise Agreement against the provisions of the French Review's *Model Code*. The University's review found that these existing legislative and policy instruments echoed and – in some cases – exceeded the *Model Code* protections for academic freedom and freedom of speech. However, one area of potential inconsistency was remedied via the approval of an Events and Facilities Hire Policy based on the principles set out in clauses (6) and (7) of the *Model Code*. The University has published a Statement of Academic or Intellectual Freedom which details the documents which are already in place at the University to protect academic freedom and free speech.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Southern Cross University's priority for teaching and learning is to deliver the highest quality courses, along with personalised student support. To that end, the University seeks to improve on key measures of quality, including; QILT, Student Experience and Destination Surveys and internal learning analytics. Student engagement is monitored through analysis of trend data on attrition/retention, completions, and student achievement profiles. A comprehensive program of curriculum reform has commenced under the leadership of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic.

Our key strategies attend to:

- **Employability;** ensuring consistency between University programs and industry expectations, as well as comprehensively mapped courseware for employability related graduate outcomes, and expansion of Work Integrated and Authentic Immersive learning.

- **Digital enhancement:** improving the quality and scope of our use of rich media, interactivity and ubiquitous technologies to personalise pedagogy and assessment approaches, and provide creative platforms for experience.

- **Authentic assessment:** connecting to authentic contexts for the application of student learning.

- **Teacher quality:** building comprehensive community of practice supports, rewards and development programs for continuing improvement across all areas connected with student learning experience.

UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS TRANSPARENCY

For school leavers, applications to study on campus and some distance education degrees are made online through the University Admissions Centre (UAC), or the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC). Non-school leavers are assessed directly by the university on the highest level of education or relevant work experience provided.

The university's non-ATAR entry methods include;

- A Principal recommendation program – STAR Early Offer Program.

- Successful completion of Preparing for Success (PSP) – a University preparation course spanning 13 weeks.

- Transition to Uni – intensive (2 unit) program only available to Year 12 students who have completed High School in the previous academic year

- Interviews/auditions for certain courses, such as Bachelor of Art and Design.

- Incomplete AQF qualifications and relevant work experience is assessed for admission against course intake requirements to ensure a comparable entry rank is achieved.

- Headstart – for High Achieving High School students we offer degree unit during Years 11 and 12 and for those that successfully complete this unit of study and Year 12 are offered a place.

Where students are admitted without an ATAR, student success is measured against trend data on retention, success and average GPA's, external measures such as QILT, Good Universities Guide and 3rd party student surveys. Student's grades and unit participation is monitored and support is offered via services such as, academic support, mentors, counselling and careers advise.

UNIVERSITY RETENTION STRATEGIES

The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Students) portfolio leads the university's student retention strategies through the provision of outstanding student support services. The *Students Scheme* provides the governing framework for the portfolio. Key initiatives include:

- **Student Zone:** a virtual and physical one-stop academic assistance centre providing support for student queries regarding assessment preparation, study skills, and conceptual numeracy or other content understandings. Students can also receive extended support via one-on-one peer or professional sessions.

- **Support for Health and Wellbeing:** addressing student's pre-arrival needs, orientation and induction, as well as the needs of continuing students. The university provides a bespoke crisis support network, and delivers programs to enhance water, beach and road safety in partnership with industry and community organisations such as BUPA and Study Gold Coast. A *Student Safety and Wellbeing Governance Committee* receives input from stakeholders across the University and community to ensure holistic provision for student welfare.

- **Student Feedback:** A Student Voice Project is conducted biannually to assess student satisfaction with the University's student support services. Combined with learning analytics, course evaluation processes, QILT data, Good Universities Guide (GUG) and exit interviews for students who withdraw from programs of study, the University develops a close

understanding of the issues affecting the student experience at Southern Cross. The data shows that we are performing well as an institution for equity and for student support with above national averages for satisfaction on these variables, and with a five star rating for Student Support from QILT and GUG.

The University's funds approximately 850 enabling places to support its *Preparing for Success* program. Student who complete *Preparing for Success* demonstrate higher bachelor retention and success rates than the direct entry cohort average.

RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING AND INNOVATION

Following approval of the University's new Strategic Plan in September 2019, the research portfolio has embarked on a 'whole of university' research capacity building program, embedding mentoring and leadership as core behaviours and the foundation of SCU research culture. All University research centres are under review, with a view to strengthening research capability and developing emerging areas of excellence. A research excellence framework will set standards of performance for academics at all levels across the university and will feed into promotion and performance management processes.

Strong engagement with industry partnerships continues through Southern Cross Plant Science; and is growing at both the *Environmental Analysis Lab* and the *Analytical Research Lab*. Industry is also co-located at the Coffs Harbour based *National Marine Science Centre,* with a focus on commercial aquaculture. The University's innovative co-funded Industry HDR program is designed to encourage HDR candidates and supervisors to engage with industry. Currently, 21 HDR students are working on doctorates formed in partnership with industry.

Southern Cross promotes open access and data management. All key researchers have *Scopus* and *ORCID* identifiers and the University is piloting *Esploro* to ensure that we have maximum exposure and impact for our research outputs. To comply with the ARC and NHMRC mandates the accepted manuscripts must be submitted to ePublications@SCU and made available on Open Access within 12 months of publishing. (https://www.scu.edu.au/library/research/publish/open-access/)

EQUITY

Southern Cross University exceeds the sector average for student access and participation rates for low socio-economic (SES), Indigenous, regional and students with a disability. Academic and non-academic support to students attend to this diversity.

The Gnibi Wandarahn Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2019 – 2021 sets out Gnibi Elders' Principles and provides a set of Reconciliation Actions with associated Deliverables, Responsibilities and Timelines across the themes of Country, Respect, Positive Engagement, Opportunities and Governance. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2017 – 2020 and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2017 – 2020 each have Performance Indicators against specific focus areas and identified responsibilities with allocated accountability. The Education Strategy includes performance targets for Indigenous student access, participation and graduation at rates commensurate or higher than other students. Support for Indigenous students is available through the Indigenous Australian Student Services.

The University employs specific strategies to increase the aspirations of school students toward higher education study. Immersive opportunities are provided to school students to enable them to better understand their full range of their study options. Key activities include our *School Outreach Program*, support for *Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME)*, and the work of *Student Ambassadors* who provide future students with the chance to ask important questions about university, study options and what's involved.

Our strategies for achieving equity for regional and remote, low SES and other equity groups include:

- **Alternative Entry Pathways:** providing a range of ways to support adult entry including work experience and personal competencies statement;

- **Scholarships**: providing financial support (including for students relocating) based on financial disadvantage;

- **Learning Experience Team**: providing a range of peer-to-peer (such as UniMentor and Study Buddi) and staff-to-student learning supports for students; and

- **Student Access and Inclusion Service**: providing customised support for students with a disability.

The University's strategies to increase community access to facilities include:

- **Enterprise Lab** – a start-up hub and co-working space and associated initiatives;

- **High Schools Access Program** to the Library; and

- Community participation in Inclusive University Diversity Calendar on-campus events such as the annual Fusion Festival and Open Days.

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

In line with the University's approved Strategic Plan 2020-2026, an A + B = C learning model is being established where A = Essential Knowledge (i.e. Scientific Diving skills), B = Professional Knowledge (i.e. Marine Science) and C = enhanced employability and career efficacy. This unique pedagogical approach naturally spans VET and Higher Education domains and is particularly suited to the university's Coffs Harbour tri-sectoral (High School, TAFE and University) campus and adjacent Innovation Hub.

Admissions, enrolments and development of graduate attributes are guided by the market analysis as well as consolidation of the advice provided by industry partners, accreditation authorities, and advisory boards. The work of the University's Careers and Employability team builds connectivity with employers and provides insight into career and labour market trends affecting graduates and course developers alike. The close alignment of the university's courses and labour market is reflected by the fact the university's graduates enjoy starting salaries higher than the majority of the sector. In key disciplines such as Nursing, employment rates approach 100%, while hospitality graduates from The Hotel School – a joint venture between Southern Cross and Mulpha Australia – enjoy up to 92% employment rates within the industry.

The University's Community Engaged Learning policy requires all courses to feature engaged (experiential) learning. Our Live Ideas engagement program supports other forms of engaged learning outside of the internship focused units, to increase the level of experiential and authentic learning through engaging with real world contexts. This is university wide and focuses on these enabling skills often not taught directly in courses.

The university's course development process mandates analysis of employer demand and job outlook – using sources such as the Department of Education market portal, joboutlook.gov.au, ABS and Professional Bodies – at the first stage of course development (EOI). Course proposals which are approved for further development must include more detailed market analysis before they are considered for final approval.

SECURITY MEASURES

Southern Cross University has a comprehensive Cybersecurity Program that is informed by, and aligns to, the Australian Cyber Security Centre's "Strategies to mitigate cybersecurity incidents". The University is a member of the following sector-wide groups that share cybersecurity information:

- **AUSCERT** - Cyber Emergency Response Team for Australia. Providing information security advice and alerts to its members in the higher education sector.

- **REN-ISAC** – US based Research and Education Networks Information Sharing and Analysis Center (REN-ISAC) providing cybersecurity operational protection and response, Security Event System (SES) threat intelligence and other automated data collection and sharing tools.

- **CAUDIT** (Council of Australasian Universities Directors of IT) Cybersecurity Community of Practice

- **QUDIT** (Queensland Universities Directors of IT) Cybersecurity Community of Practice

The University continues to build on the University's governance framework to manage the availability, usability, integrity and security of University data. Finally, the University has separate response plans for Cyber Security Incidents and Data Breaches. University technology staff receive regular training as prescribed by these plans.

Southern Cross University's membership of CAUDIT, AusCERT and AARNet provides access to the Australasian Higher Education Cybersecurity Service (AHECS) cybersecurity framework. This initiative seeks to help universities safeguard their intellectual property and reputation via adoption of best practice cyber-risk mitgation. The AHECS cybersecurity framework maps both existing and proposed services across 4 key focus areas – engagement, advocacy and advisory, support and operations, and training and is mapped to the NIST framework.

Foreign Interference

The University has a number of measures in place to minimise the risk of foreign interference and ensure compliance with relevant legislation including the *Autonomous Sanctions Act 2011*, the *Defence Trade Controls Act 2012* and the *Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018*.

The International Security Sanctions and Compliance Policy establishes how the University complies with applicable sanction laws. As set out in this policy, the University has adopted a case -by-case compliance approach in relation to specific activities involving foreign persons or entities. The University is reviewing this policy to determine whether it needs to be updated in light of the recently issued Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector.

The University's Office of Research has oversight of research collaborations and the Legal Office is engaged to review any non-standard agreements. A Project Pre-Approval Form is required for every proposed research project which must be signed off by the Head of Work Unit and provided to the Office of Research. The risk of foreign interference is considered when relevant. All applicants for Higher Degrees by Research much complete a United Nations Security Council and Australian Autonomous Sanctions Higher Degree Research Compliance Assessment Form. The decision to approve an application is made by the Dean, Graduate Studies who considers the risk of foreign interference where relevant.

The resources and training provided to research staff and students is under review and, if necessary, will be updated to provide additional material in relation to the foreign interference where necessary.

Additional policies and procedures seek to minimise the risk of foreign interference across other areas of the University including:

(a) Information Technology Conditions of Use Policy - various measures designed to minimise the risk of cyber threats, including those involving foreign influence.

(b) Code of Conduct – sets out the University's requirements in relation to conflicts of interest. A standalone Conflicts of Interest Policy is currently being developed.

(c) The University is undertaking a major update of its Travel and Entertainment Policies and Procedures which will include consideration of security requirements when travelling internationally. The risk of foreign interference will be assessed when the request for travel is considered.

Risks associated with foreign interference are included in the relevant University risk registers. The University's Audit and Risk Management Committee is provided with an update on cybersecurity risks at each meeting. This includes consideration of the threat of a cyber incident by a foreign entity.

SIGNED for and on behalf of

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by

DOM ENGLISH

Full name (please print)

FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY , HIGHER EDUCATION

Position

of the Department of Education as delegate of
the Minister for Education.

Signature

17 FEBRUARY 2020

Date

In the presence of:

MICHELLE TAN

Witness (please print)

DIRECTOR , FUNDING POLICY AND PAYMENTS

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

SIGNED for and on behalf of
**SOUTHERN CROSS
UNIVERSITY** by

PROFESSOR ADAM SHOEMAKER

Full name (please print)

VICE CHANCELLOR

Position

Signature

In the presence of:

NICHOLAS HYDE

Witness (please print)

Director OUC.

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature