



**2020 Mission Based Compact
Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary
Education**

PURPOSE

This compact is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (Batchelor Institute). 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

In this section the University should refer to information on:

- *its primary focus over the term of this compact*
- *its values and aspirations, what it does and how it can best serve the interests of its students, staff and key stakeholders*
- *how the university has responded to the French Review recommendations to adopt the Model Code on free speech and academic freedom.*

The Batchelor Institute is constituted by legislation as “an educational institution for the tertiary education of indigenous people of Australia and the provision of other educational and training programs and courses, and facilities and resources for research and study”.

Noting that the Batchelor Institute’s Strategic Plan is due to expire at the end of 2020, the Institute is currently engaged in a strategic planning process. The intent of the organisation as an education institution specifically focused on the advancement of First Nations peoples and knowledges will remain, however, the Institute’s aspirations and how we carry out our mission may evolve. Developing and implementing the Institute’s new strategic plan will be a significant focus of the Batchelor Institute in the next year.

Batchelor Institute is a Table A Higher Education Provider with National Institute status and a seven-year TEQSA registration from 2017 to 2024. The Institute has self-accrediting authority for courses at AQF levels 8, 9 and 10 and offers Higher Degree by Research (HDR) training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates through Masters by Research and PhD programmes. As any undergraduate unit teaching the Institute delivers falls under a partnership arrangement with Charles Darwin University (CDU), and relates to CDU owned and accredited programs, this Compact will deal only with Batchelor’s higher degree by research training activity.

While this response relates to the Institute’s activities in the higher degree by research space, to provide context to the overall reason for being of the organisation it is useful to note that Batchelor Institute is the only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dual sector tertiary education provider in Australia. Under its ‘Both-ways’ philosophy, the Institute significantly provides an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens to a mainstream education system.

As a specialist First Nations tertiary education provider we work to meet the diverse training and education needs, aspirations and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, providing a place and space for learning and engagement across language groups and country. In this way, Batchelor Institute becomes a connecting point for students and research candidates, opening the door to new knowledges and qualifications, across Higher Education, Research and VET sectors. More information regarding Batchelor Institute can be found here-<https://www.batchelor.edu.au/about/>

In terms of the French Review recommendations, as you would be aware the Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, wrote to heads of universities and tertiary education facilities including myself regarding the outcomes of the French Review and the proposed Model Code for the protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers (the Model Code). Acknowledging that the making of regulations and policies by a university or higher education provider is a matter for our respective organisations, he asked that our individual institutes give full and careful consideration to adopting the Model Code as an institutional regulation or, where this is not possible, as an overarching institutional policy.

Within the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education organisational governance structure designates that only our Institute Council can approve the adoption of an overarching fundamental policy such as the proposed code. Following Minister Tehan's letter Batchelor Institute's Council members were provided a copy of the report including the Model Code for noting. Council have directed that specific advice be drafted for their consideration regarding adoption of the proposed Model Code within the Institute. Based on this direction the proposed Model Code, is currently being reviewed and compared against existing Institutional policies and documents that enshrine current guidelines for Academic Freedom and Free Speech within the Institute. We anticipate that this body of work will be completed in time for Council's March 2020 meeting for Council's consideration.

In considering this issue, I note that there are a number of unique factors that our Institute's Council will need to balance. You may be aware that the Institute provided a submission to the French Review public consultation process and some of these factors were outlined in our submission. In the Institute's January 2019 submission, we noted that there are various conceptual understanding and practical applications and challenges which impact on freedom of expression and inquiry at the Batchelor Institute. Academic freedom and associated concepts of intellectual expression and inquiry and freedom of speech have the potential to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and facilitate the ability of Aboriginal researchers to challenge and contest traditional western normative concepts of Aboriginality within current academia and overall society. This approach also allows opportunities for the rich diversity within between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples to be explored and reflected.

Unlike other educational organisations, Batchelor Institute is driven by valuing the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to fully participate in, and contribute to, high value dual sector education, training and research. In recognising this, there is a requirement to allow freedom of expression and inquiry that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, experiences and cultural contexts to be included within a mainstream academic disciplinary approach. Further, it should also be noted that being a dual sector organisation, the application of freedom of expression and inquiry at the Institute is not limited to the higher education area. The principle applies across both the VET and Higher Education sectors as well as other corporate areas. One of our challenges in this space is ensuring the responsibilities attached to the right of freedom of expression are upheld and demonstrated in an appropriate manner.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

In this section the University should refer to:

- *its objectives and/or priorities for teaching and learning*
- *its strategies to ensure quality in teaching and learning*

UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS TRANSPARENCY

- *how the University selects students for offers without an ATAR score, as part of its admissions process*
- *what evaluation strategies are in place for ensuring that students admitted without an ATAR are likely to succeed in their studies.*

As noted above Batchelor Institute does not offer courses at the Bachelor level. Instead our staff teach into CDU accredited courses. Admission processes and evaluation mechanisms are administered by CDU.

UNIVERSITY RETENTION STRATEGIES

- *strategies to reduce the proportion of students that do not complete their course (including for students from regional and remote areas)*
- *evaluation of these strategies, including follow-up with students who do not continue with their studies to better understand the reasons for this decision.*

The Institute's current Teaching and Learning Plan has the following four goals:

1. Provide a culturally safe training, teaching, learning and research environment for both students and staff.
2. Focus on higher education, research and training that support the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples and lead to employment.
3. Promote and commit to increasing innovative and flexible approaches to training, teaching and learning.
4. Increase access to training, higher education and research, and retention and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students.

In relation to goal 4 and the Institute's HDR candidates the Institute has, across 2018 and 2019:-

- (i) Re-accredited its Masters and PhD program and introduced four (4) specialist research training units into both awards
- (ii) Created the new executive position of Director of Student Experience within the Institute's organisational structure to further strengthen existing student supports as well as identify and establish new high quality, innovative supports where required.
- (iii) Facilitated increased supervisor and candidate interaction through candidate travel to intensive tuition and supervisor consultations or for approved special purpose research development activities, including NIRAKN sponsored events;
- (iv) Travelled and accommodated candidates to increase candidate attendance and participation in the HDR masterclass programs;
- (v) Extended Batchelor Institute library support to long-distance and regional and remote HDR candidates through provision of a dedicated HDR librarian;
- (vi) Provided case management administrative and follow up support to candidates to ensure candidates are working to the progression milestones and reporting deadlines of their candidature;
- (vii) Provided contracted editing services for candidates as they finalise their theses for examination;

- (viii) Funded attendance and participation by candidates to conferences of relevance to their HDR research topics and early career researcher development opportunities;
- (ix) Provided external expertise to support student wellbeing, including presentations, exercises and confidential support by contracted counsellors to promote candidate self-care across their lengthy candidatures
- (x) Contracted expertise to design and implement an HDR-specific Indigenous Student Success Programme (ISSP) scholarship framework along with accompanying policy, guidelines and process documents and amended material and forms
- (xi) Redesigned supervisor recruitment, registration and training/support processes across the Institute

The case management approach afforded by relatively small HDR enrolment numbers allow for frequent and robust communication with candidates. This allows us to keep up to date and informed throughout all stages of candidature, enabling mediation and resolution of potential issues before impending census dates.

Where candidates are not meeting the requirements of the programme, collaborative reviews are initiated, and extensive support and guidance offered. Only when all processes are exhausted, appropriate “at risk” and “show cause” notices and strategies are employed.

Across the term of this Compact the Institute will monitor and review the impact of activities (i) to (xi) and refine their implementation where required. In addition, across this Compact period, the Institute further develop its approach to HDR candidate health and wellbeing. This work will inform a larger Mental Health Strategy for the organisation

RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING AND INNOVATION

In this section the University should refer to or provide information on:

- *strategies to ensure excellence in research and the strengthening of research capability*
- *strategies for the provision of high quality research training, including measures to encourage PhD industry placements. This information should identify the expected number of industry placements.*
- *strategies to encourage research translation and commercialisation, including collaboration and engagement with industry and other end users, and the measures of success that the university monitors in this area*
- *strategies to promote open access to research publications and data.*

Specific research and research training strengthening measures have been outlined in the previous section. As practical measures, they fit within a broader research approach at Batchelor Institute that privileges the voices of First Nations’ Peoples and Communities by engaging in culturally-enriched research that promotes innovation. Through partnerships with Communities, Peoples, industry and government, the Institute’s research engages a strengths-based approach to education, creative industries, languages and livelihoods.

Central to our research approach and activities is the generation of research that affirms, promotes, and is guided by the contemporary perspectives of First Nations Peoples - a process required by actively engaging the concept of Both-ways. By applying key measures of culturally-engaged research, we aim to ensure our research supports the input and agency of First Nations Peoples, Communities and communities-of-practice at a local and international level.

The Institute offers a distinct and culturally secure experience to our HDR candidates, with the support offered by the Institute forming a key aspect of this overall experience. Our supervisory support approach and the networks developed by the Institute for our HDR candidates supports an academically sound research training framework.

The Institute maintains a searchable repository of research outputs.

Strengthening of research capability will be supported through strategies that emerge from the Institute's new Strategic Plan. In turn a revised Research Plan, with a strong focus First Nations-led research, increasing Indigenous HDR enrolments and greater research impact will commence over the life of this Compact.

EQUITY

In this section the University should refer to information on:

- *strategies for improving Indigenous outcomes and related targets*
- *strategies for achieving equity for regional and remote students, for low socio economic students and students from other equity groups*
- *strategies for reducing unemployment in the regions serviced by institutions, including youth unemployment rates*
- *strategies for increasing student support for relocating students (potentially including specialised on-boarding programs)*
- *strategies to increase community access to university facilities*
- *strategies to increase aspirations and advice to school students on study options.*

Essentially all of the Institutes policies are founded on Equity principles. The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Act outlines the Institute's primary functions which includes providing tertiary education relevant to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and generally facilitating, encouraging, developing and improving study and research, particularly in subjects of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Institute also administers schemes of financial and other assistance for students and persons studying or carrying out research at the Institute, including, in the case of students, financial assistance in the form of loans, grants or other benefits.

The Institute provides students with meals, accommodation and transport when attending HDR Masterclass workshops at Batchelor and Alice Springs campuses.

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

In this section the University should refer to information on:

- *strategies for identifying skills gaps within the relevant student and business catchments*
- *strategies for meeting labour market priorities at a local, regional and/or national level*
- *strategies to address employability and graduate attribute skills gaps to ensure students are work-ready*
- *the application of these strategies to admissions and enrolments*
- *how labour market strategies are taken into account in developing course offerings.*

Our HDR candidate profile is made up of predominantly professional working students undertaking their research training award part time while in employment or fulltime through extended leave arrangements or following retirement. Some candidates – particularly those from the creative industries – are self-employed and undertaking their research alongside or within their creative practice businesses.

Career and early career researcher advice is available to all HDR candidates through the Institute's Graduate School and strategies to respond to labour market priorities and the aspirations of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients will be incorporated into the Institute's new Research Plan

SECURITY MEASURES

In this section the University should refer to information on:

- *actions being taken to ensure the safety of data against cyber attack*
- *mitigation strategies in the case of a breach of security*
- *how the University complies with the Australian Cyber Security Centre's "Strategies to mitigate cyber security incidents" document (<https://www.cyber.gov.au/publications/strategies-to-mitigate-cyber-security-incidents-mitigation-details>)*
- *measures in place to enhance the identification and deterrence of foreign interference activities including actions to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.*

Batchelor Institute has sophisticated firewalls provided by both Telstra externally and Portal internally via Fortigate including Universal Threat Management as well as running best practice anti-malware and anti-virus software also on servers and workstations / laptops. These are continually monitored and kept up to date. These systems and software will have been entirely upgraded by the end of 2019 with further enhanced firewalls and a higher degree of continual reporting capabilities.

Access and password polices are in place and if a breach was detected by the monitoring systems this would be resolved quickly. Further mitigation strategies used include remote access via Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection only for staff who are not physically on Batchelor campuses. Universal Threat Management systems are also deployed to help mitigate any breach type issues into BI systems.

All internal systems are patched and maintained to current releases to close any potential security vulnerabilities that may occur in supplied products. Internal operations are also protected by SSL certificates where appropriate including externally available content if delivered via web systems. All ICT systems are deployed to meet and exceed the government ACSC recommendations following the Strategies to mitigate Cyber Security Incidents - Mitigation details.

Any cloud storage solutions meet Australian guidelines and data sovereignty guidelines. Staff are continually made aware of sophisticated email phishing schemes and processes for approvals are in place to help capture internal actions should an individual act on an invalid email to remove single points of failure. Enhanced email filtering is also in place to further remove security threats that can arrive via email systems.

Internally operational policies are continually being reviewed based on new intel to help ensure safe and secure operations.

In terms of foreign interference activities, that is when activities are carried out by, or on behalf of a foreign actor, which are coercive, covert, deceptive or corrupting and are contrary to Australian's sovereignty, values and national interests we believe that there is a low risk of such activities to the Institute. In making this assessment I note that:

- the Batchelor Institute was established for the education and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples.
 - all of our students are Australian citizens as are the overwhelming majority of our staff.
- the Institute does not have registration to teach overseas and we do not teach foreign students.

- the overwhelming majority of the Institute's funding comes from the Australian and Northern Territory Governments.
- as an Institute we do not receive donations from either overseas organisations or foreign governments.
- we do not have partnerships or research relationships with overseas based organisations.
- very limited numbers of our staff or students travel internationally for their work or study.
 - Where travel occurs, it is to countries that Australia has security alliances with such as the United States, Canada and New Zealand.

Further to information provided about Cyber Security in our initial Mission Compact report, I note that in terms of identification and deterrence of foreign interference activities:

- all staff go through a police check prior to employment; and
- staff are required to undertake a notification of interest (conflict of interest) process which are updated on a regular basis.

However, noting the importance of this issue, foreign interference will be raised at our next meeting of the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee.

SIGNED for and on behalf of

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by Danielle Donegan, Acting First Assistant Secretary,
Higher Education Division of the Department of
Education, Skills and Employment as delegate of the
Minister for Education.

Signed by

Danielle Donegan

Date: 17 December 2020

In the presence of:

Signed by

Sabrina Kim

Position of witness

Policy Officer

SIGNED for and on behalf of

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary
Education

Signed by

Ms Jessie Borthwick

Position

Acting Chief Executive Officer

In the presence of:

Signed by

Ms Samantha Crossman

Position or profession of witness

Director Executive Services
