



**2020 Mission Based Compact
Between the Commonwealth of Australia and The University of Sydney**

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

[The University of Sydney 2016-20 Strategic Plan](#) represents phase two of a 10-year vision. Building on our 2011-15 Plan, it aims to create and sustain a university in which, for the benefit of both Australia and the wider world, the brightest researchers and the most promising students, whatever their social or cultural background, can thrive and realise their potential.

The Plan has been built around four strategic themes: excellence, engagement, a values-based culture and organisational simplification. It is underpinned by the shared values of courage and creativity, respect and integrity, inclusion and diversity, and openness and engagement.

Our strategic goals focus on:

- A culture of research excellence, through an increased focus on strategies to attract and develop outstanding researchers, and partnerships supporting the societal impact of our research.
- A distinctive Sydney education, through a re-imagined and future-oriented undergraduate curriculum and the development of more interactive and collaborative learning experiences.
- A culture built on values, by fostering an aspirational culture in which every member of the University can thrive.

Our Senate established in 2016 a comprehensive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework to monitor progress towards achievement of our goals. The framework includes both internal metrics and a range of measures against which we benchmark our performance with peer institutions in Australia and internationally. We report regularly to Senate against this KPI framework.

FRENCH REVIEW MODEL CODE IMPLEMENTATION

In December 2019, the Senate of the University agreed to adopt the recommendations of its French Review Model Code Implementation Group, including that we adopt the French Model Code by amending our *Charter of Academic Freedom* and adding a set of principles based on those contained in the Code. The revised [Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#) includes a set of Principles for the protection of freedom of speech and academic freedom and commenced on 1 January 2020.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

In 2016, we transformed our undergraduate curriculum to prepare our students to contribute and lead in a rapidly changing future. We are seeking to do this by ensuring that every graduate develops an appropriate balance between, on the one hand, deep disciplinary expertise in their chosen field(s) of study and, on the other, a set of broader capabilities, including an understanding of broader intellectual landscapes, the skills for collaboration, invention and influence, and the integration of knowledge with professional and personal ethics and values.

To achieve this, every student's educational experience is characterised by the development of:

- **academic depth and rigour** in the primary field of study;
- **global and cultural perspectives** - to work productively, collaboratively and openly in diverse groups and across cultural boundaries and with a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures;
- **cross disciplinary learning** - whether expertise in another field, broader skills and ideas from other fields, or the capacity to use disciplinary expertise in contexts where interdisciplinary collaboration is required; and
- **authentic application of expertise to real-world challenges** - achieved by working in new ways with the industry, community, and research and innovation sectors to ensure that every student has at least one substantial experience of working on problems and opportunities that are of genuine value and realistically contextualised in one of these sectors.

We also set a target that by 2020, 50% of our students will have a substantial intensive or semester-length educational experience overseas. The first students commenced in the new undergraduate curriculum in Semester 1 2018, with enrolments increasing compared to 2017 levels.

Supporting the curriculum change are a number of additional initiatives:

- **The Curriculum Development Fund (CDF)** - for the integrated redesign of curriculum.
- **The Strategic Education Grants Scheme** - for the transformation of learning experiences aligned to curriculum redesign.
- A new **University-wide approach to assessment**, including assessment of shared, University-wide high-level learning outcomes, or *graduate qualities*.
- A new **Learning Management System**, to provide a contemporary environment for flexible and interactive learning.
- Continued development of **richer systems for analytics**, improving feedback to staff and students on gaps in engagement, understanding and skills.
- A **Student Experience Strategy**, to support students to:
 - build meaningful connection to the University by reinforcing the relational aspects of teaching and the educational value of peer interactions and relationships;
 - transition successfully to the University community and have access to academic and career advice at key moments of further transition;
 - be able to access essential support when barriers to educational engagement arise; and
 - enjoy a consistent and seamless experience of interacting with the University and its community.

We have worked closely with TEQSA's Admissions Transparency team to optimise our admissions transparency. All recommendations arising from the Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group were fully implemented in 2019.

We have implemented the language of transparency around adjustment factors. Where previously the University operated a concession scheme, we now express our admission policy in terms of selection rank and adjustment factors and we pre-publish a guaranteed selection rank (ATAR plus adjustment factor) for some courses.

Every applicant must have an ATAR or equivalent, with the exception of Indigenous applicants. We have developed a new process for evaluating Gadigal Program students, including making early offers based on scores from the [Wingara Mura - Bunga Barrabugu Summer Program](#). These scores are evaluated by a cross-faculty committee convened by the DVC Indigenous Strategy and Services who ensures that appropriate support can be provided.

UNIVERSITY RETENTION STRATEGIES

We regard student retention as one of our key educational performance indicators. We are pleased that our current retention rate is among the highest in the sector, but we believe there is opportunity for further improvement and have committed to an improvement in student retention of 1% on implementation of our *Student Experience Strategy* by 2021. Relevant initiatives in the Strategy include: more effective use of outcome data for specific student cohorts to inform cohort-focused support; more focused advising support for students not on track for success; and the introduction of systematic monitoring of barriers to student success to ensure effective targeting of student support services.

We monitor retention figures across our courses closely to ensure they remain at their current high levels. The retention rate for all students remained steady in 2019 at 89.22% (89.20% for 2018).

We monitor, and have a process for managing, students who are at risk of not progressing or not completing. Identified students are notified, provided with advice and entered into a stage-appropriate management scheme.

We monitor student engagement and have an integrated set of strategies in our Student Experience Program designed to improve students' sense of belonging, effective transition into the University, academic advice and student engagement.

We introduced maths pre-requisites for the 2019 intake to ensure that students have sufficient maths skill to succeed in their studies. Notably, since announcing in 2016 that we would introduce maths pre-requisites from 2019, the numbers of students completing HSC Mathematics in NSW increased by 10.4% in 2018 compared to 2016, even though there has been a 0.9% decline in the overall size of the HSC cohort over the same period.

RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING AND INNOVATION

During the final year of our aspirational *2016-20 Strategic Plan*, our focus is on embedding and delivering key initiatives designed to build excellence and strengthen [research capability](#). These include:

- Embedding a culture of aspirational research performance, focused on excellence (clearly defined and benchmarked), engagement and innovation (academic promotions criteria reward innovation, research translation and engagement) across the University.
- Continuing to build our research capability and engagement with industry through investment in critical new and publicly available infrastructure and expert technical

support services within our seven specialist [Core Research Facilities](#): the Research and Prototype Foundry, Sydney Analytical, Sydney Cytometry, Sydney Imaging, Sydney Informatics Hub, Sydney Mass Spectrometry and Sydney Microscopy and Microanalysis.

- Adjusting our model for internal investment in research to better drive and support uplift in research performance, as measured by university wide KPIs, at an individual, school and faculty level.
- Refreshing the suite of fellowship and prize schemes we offer to better develop our researchers at all stages of their career, as well as encourage excellence. The Sydney Research Accelerator ([SOAR](#)) Prize is an example of a scheme that combines support for an Early- and Mid-career researchers' research, innovation and development plans with a personalised program of development, support and structured mentoring.
- Defining and capturing the impact from our Multidisciplinary Research Initiatives, including new agreed KPIs for research outcomes, impact and development.
- Ensuring our Sydney Innovation System is fully embedded across the university, building on our faculty-embedded Business Development Managers supporting the commercialisation of research outcomes, as well as clearly defined and supported training and development opportunities for academic staff, in addition to close collaboration with our funding partners (e.g. Uniseed, IP Group).
- As part of our increased investment in industry collaboration and the commercialisation of our research, the [Sydney Knowledge Hub](#) opened its doors on 1 October 2019. The SKH, located in the heart of our Darlington/Camperdown campus, will provide co-working spaces for small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) start-ups from within and outside the University and will provide them with the opportunity to take advantage of close proximity to our core research facilities, students and other university services.

We are participating actively in advancing the open access agenda in Australia through Universities Australia and the Group of Eight Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) committees and are drafting an institutional policy. We have also been heavily engaged with the Office of the National Data Commissioner's development of a national framework for the safe sharing and release of data held by the Commonwealth.

Our Higher Degree Research (HDR) graduate qualities focus on the skills and capabilities required to maximise success both during and after HDR studies. We support the achievement of the HDR graduate qualities by providing coursework which improves their research and workplace readiness, and by increasing the opportunities for research students to engage with industry. HDR coursework encourages cross-disciplinary thinking and is offered using varying modes of delivery and learning schedules in the academic year to accommodate the needs of off-site and part-time students. Four broad activities connect research students with industry:

- **Industry PhDs** are delivered with industry partners through ARC-funded Industrial Transformation and Training Hubs, Cooperative Research Centres and other similar ventures.
- **Shared candidatures** where students work with a partner organisation in areas of research other than the candidate's thesis topic, providing the student with work-ready skills and experiences that would not ordinarily develop from the student's PhD work. We work with partners to develop these schemes and have recently helped the NSW Government Department of Education deliver a similar scheme for five students. As shared candidatures are bespoke, our target is at least five students annually involved in such schemes.
- **HDR internships** are a critical investment in the development of students as researchers. They increase both students' capacity to deliver impactful research and the uptake of research findings by industry. We aim to have 100 students undertaking HDR internships in any one year.

- **Intensive activities** are short projects where HDR students work with industry to solve real-world problems, either as part of the curriculum, as an ad hoc faculty exercise, or as part of a University challenge. Over the next five years, we aim to increase the number of students undertaking these activities from 30 to 120 per year.

EQUITY

Our objectives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education, research and community engagement are outlined in our integrated strategy '[Wingara Mura - Bunga Barrabugu](#)'. This strategy is founded on the premise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, research and engagement are integral to the core business of the University and are the responsibility of our whole University community. It is supported by significant funding as an institution-wide strategic priority, which is used for a wide range of initiatives undertaken by faculties and professional service units.

In 2020 we have continued our integrated program of school outreach and dedicated support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In 2019, we introduced an Early Conditional Offer scheme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with 44 Year 12 students being made early offers in August. We also launched our new *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategic Framework 2019-2021*, which outlines our objectives and actions to recruit and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

The key strategies we are pursuing to increase educational outcomes for students from under-represented groups include:

- **Pre-Access** - Pre-tertiary personal and academic capacity building programs to increase access and participation in higher education for young people from low-SES families, regional and remote areas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.
- **Access** - Delivery of targeted admission pathway programs including: Early Offer Year 12 (E12) Scheme, Gadigal Program and Broadway schemes and other specific scholarships.
- **Participation** - Provision and promotion of student support programs which ameliorate challenges faced by equity cohorts - transition, retention and success initiatives to decrease early attrition and encourage students' positive engagement, learning experience and sense of belonging.
- **Progress and attainment** - Ensuring successful completion and preparation for employment including student experience and graduate destination analyses, and targeted career development initiatives.

We are also reinvigorating our 2019 Access and Participation Plan strategies as we look to implement a new Widening Participation Strategy in 2021.

Our Disability Services team helps students with disability to access reasonable adjustments and provides advice to prospective students about support services. Reasonable adjustments are any changes to the academic environment that provide a student with disability the best possible opportunity to succeed in their studies.

By 2050, more than 4 million people will live in Western Sydney. Already the third largest economy by GDP in Australia, Sydney's second CBD at Parramatta is the growing and dynamic heart of Australia. Building on our 40-year presence as a key partner in the Westmead Health Precinct, our planned new Parramatta/Westmead Campus will, if it progresses, become a vibrant 24/7 destination with medical, sports, arts and cultural amenities along with affordable accommodation for students, staff and key works.

Over the next 30 years, we estimate that planning proposals for Parramatta/Westmead will create more than 20,000 new jobs and add more than \$60 billion to the NSW economy, \$15 billion in exports, and contribute an additional \$28 billion in federal and state taxes.

We will use our existing Westmead activity as a springboard to deliver on-campus and research-informed public health and wellbeing services that help move healthcare from hospitals into the community. Included in our proposal is the potential for the provision, through a partnership arrangement, of a comprehensive pre-kindergarten to Year 12 school with a focus on innovative learning and teaching practice, as well as a centre for innovation in education, to build capacity for Western Sydney schools.

We are committed to creating campuses that are open, inviting and accessible to the general community. Gehl Architects, a global leader in people centred urban design, was commissioned by the University to investigate strategies to enhance our Camperdown campus's connections to the surrounding areas, encouraging better design for pedestrian and cyclist access as well as proposing ideas to activate spaces to encourage community on campus.

This has included a renewed focus on placemaking including the following initiatives:

- installation of public art by leading Indigenous artists;
- development of indigenous planting strategies;
- creation of diverse spaces for a range of uses and for a diverse range of users;
- creation of The Footbridge Gallery as a digital placemaking prototype and space for collaborative projects with the community; and
- connecting the University to the surrounding public domain such as Victoria Park through creating new welcoming gateway entrances.

We will continue to implement placemaking and creative activities and to explore ideas and projects that the community can actively participate in.

Our **Greater Western Sydney Pre-Tertiary Educational Enrichment** program consists of on-campus, in-school, in-community, online and residential learning experiences, drawing on leading institutional expertise.

Our **Expanded NSW Regional Outreach** program consists of in-school personal and academic skills enrichment, key early transition advice, scholarship and support information, and on-campus residential experiences.

We engage and connect with teachers, families and community influencers to foster sustained change in beliefs and attitudes about higher education.

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

A critical component of our undergraduate curriculum reforms was the development - in consultation with employer groups - of new *University of Sydney graduate qualities*, which we conceptualise as shared, high-level undergraduate course learning outcomes. We have developed and are piloting a process for introducing assessment of these graduate qualities and will be working with employer groups to map them against professional capabilities.

Our strategy commits us to substantial increases in experiential learning opportunities offered across all of our programs. Many professional programs already offer required placement programs, and many also offer programs rich in studio, field, laboratory/practical, research and innovation experience. To these, we are seeking to add additional interdisciplinary or interprofessional experiential opportunities. For disciplines with a less well-established program of experiential learning, we have been working to increase opportunities for elective internships and research and innovation projects, including in interdisciplinary settings.

One flagship development has been the creation of [Industry and Community Project Units \(ICPUs\)](#) which are available, in principle, to every undergraduate student. In these units, we ask industry, community and entrepreneurship partners to identify contemporary problems and challenges facing their organisation. Students work on these projects in multidisciplinary teams, thereby learning to collaborate with other students with diverse forms of expertise and building the capability to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired across the undergraduate program to an authentic opportunity or problem, and to demonstrate the attainment of graduate qualities.

Admissions for students into health sector and education sector courses include high IELTS scores to ensure that student outcomes meet industry demand and reflect key employer requirements. These higher English language standards assist students in meeting post-graduation registration requirements set by health and education professional accreditation bodies.

We have relatively strong graduate outcomes, with the Graduate Outcomes Survey for 2019 showing that 77% of our undergraduates were in full-time employment 4 to 6 months after graduation, compared to 70% of undergraduates from Australian universities. Our undergraduates also scored highly (78%-85%) on the Graduate Attributes scale which measures the extent to which graduates who are employed agreed that they were prepared for employment. The employment figures are even stronger for postgraduate coursework and research graduates, with 80% and 83% respectively in full-time employment and 94% and 95% in the workforce. The breadth and depth of our engagement with employers and the success of our graduates underpin our consistently high ranking in the [QS Graduate Employability Rankings \(in 2020, #1 in Australia, #4 in the world\)](#).

Nonetheless, we recognise the value for students of greater access to career advice and development and of early opportunities to reflect on and begin to articulate strengths, interests and emerging aspirations. We also recognise the importance of contemporary, accurate information on career and further study opportunities, employer and labour market trends and entrepreneurship pathways. We therefore committed to our *Student Experience Strategy 2019-21* to enhance students' career development throughout their enrolment, including through activities embedded in the curriculum.

SECURITY MEASURES

The security of our information and systems is fundamental to our ability to deliver a world class educational experience for students and excellence in research. This is a key focus area that we are continuing to mature and have made significant improvements. We apply a standards-based approach to managing cyber security risks, supported by a clear policy framework and substantial resources. Our defense-in-depth approach, and our cyber security policy framework, encompass technical, procedural and personnel controls across all National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) Cyber Security Framework control domains. In the design of our control model we have adopted many, but not yet all, of the Australian Signals Directorate's (ASD) recommended mitigation strategies for prevention of malware delivery and execution, and for cyber security incident detection, response, containment and recovery.

We recognise that preventive measures cannot provide absolute protection from highly skilled, resourced and motivated threat actors. Consequently, we have partnered with managed security service providers to deliver a continuous monitoring, incident detection and response capability. The implementation, maturing and continuous improvement of these advanced security operations capabilities is key to improving our ability to rapidly identify and respond to threat actors targeting our staff, students, researchers and information.

Well before the new Australian Government's foreign influence and transparency scheme laws took effect in December 2018 we had familiarised ourselves with the legislation's requirements and added them to our legislative compliance framework. We conducted risk assessments of areas considered to be potentially engaged in registrable activities. Guidance notes were prepared and circulated to relevant faculties, schools and professional service units. We engage at various levels with Government officials from relevant agencies to ensure the currency of our knowledge of relevant threats, compliance requirements and continue to monitor activities through the legal and risk assessment processes embedded in our business development and research agreement policies and practices. We continue to raise awareness about relevant risks and laws amongst our staff by providing updated briefing materials, presentations, workshops and by providing training and resources.

We engaged closely with the independent review of the Defence Trade Controls Act and are working with the Government on the implementation of the various recommendations arising from the report of that review. Similarly, we are engaged with the work of the Universities Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT) to enhance dialogue between universities and relevant government agencies about current and emerging foreign interference risks and to develop best practice guidelines to build resilience against interference in Australian universities. Looking forward, our focus will be on improving the integration of the various aspects of our foreign influence risk mitigation strategies and to improving levels of awareness and understanding of these risks amongst our staff, affiliates, industry partners and students.

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
University of Sydney**

Signed by
Dr Michael Spence AC

Position
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

In the presence of:

Signed by
Michael Mastello

Position or profession of witness
Logistics Coordinator
