

OFFICIAL



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

2021-2023 MISSION BASED COMPACT BETWEEN THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY LIMITED

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

Over the term of this Compact, our core mission for knowledge, human dignity and advancing the common good is underpinned by three key focus areas:

Opportunity: our focus is to impact and enrich lives through learning and knowledge. We believe society is advanced through educational opportunity and ensure that education is an opportunity accessible to people from all walks of life, and everyone is treated with dignity. We aim to inspire and connect people, and act with empathy and courage.

Innovation: our focus is to cultivate the imagination and exceed expectations. We seek out opportunities and respond to challenges while maintaining our core identity and purpose. We leverage innovation to meet evolving expectations and needs of our students. Our graduates will be highly skilled, resilient, and ready to embrace the challenges of tomorrow.

Ethics: our focus is to strive toward a better future for humanity. Our ethical focus gives us a wide and generous view of the common good. We celebrate diversity and welcome different ideas. Our mission, founded in Catholic faith and tradition, makes a rich contribution to ethics and our ethical approach.

ACU has set in motion significant activity in innovation, and has identified three main innovation areas:

- course product portfolio, modes of delivery, life-long learning, employment outcomes;
- the student lifecycle, particularly Indigenous and other equity group students; and
- academic culture, industry and partner-engaged research, and intellectual engagement of our staff.

Measures: Student retention (including Indigenous and equity groups), student experience, graduate employment, establishment of VC Industry Advisory Group.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Adoption of the Model Code

As an institution that pursues knowledge, dignity and the common good, ACU has a fundamental commitment to freedom of expression and academic inquiry, underpinned by its Enterprise Agreement. ACU adopted an early and decisive stance on the French Review recommendations.

The University's long-standing position on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom is now embedded in a University Statute (the equivalent of a by-law that can only be made, amended, and revoked by the University's Senate). The adoption of the Statute on [Freedom of Speech and Intellectual Freedom](#) in early 2020 ensures that academic and intellectual freedom and freedom of speech are accorded a status within ACU of the highest order. Recognising also that the University has a duty to foster the wellbeing of all university community members, the Statute safeguards students, staff, and invited visitors on our campuses and ensures that freedom of speech, association, and representation continue to flourish at ACU.

Our approach to further implementing the Statute includes two initiatives:

- continue to progress the implementation plan with a comprehensive review of the existing University policy suite to ensure consistency with the new Statute; and
- the University is also updating the Academic Board Statute to further empower its academic governance body in ensuring academic integrity at ACU and in accord with the Model Code.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

Industry engagement and labour market outcomes

ACU's Education Strategy was developed in 2020. It prioritises the student learning experience with a key focus on facilitating a transition to a range of future employment prospects by providing students with opportunities to develop essential skills that enhance their competitiveness, employability and understanding of local and global citizenship.

ACU has strong Industry engagement with sectors aligned with our curriculum, including, Health and other allied fields, Education, Law, Business, Arts, and Humanities. Our industry focus is broad, including providing work integrated learning opportunities for all students; integrated professional experience; industry certifications embedded within the curriculum; live research projects; simulations; capstone units and an industry incubator.

ACU curriculum design is market-led and supported by industry stakeholder groups informed by national and international data sets and research to identify skills gaps in labour market priority areas. The curriculum is carefully mapped to accreditation requirements and ACUs graduate attributes. Students are provided with opportunities to demonstrate achievement (e.g. via capstone units, WIL, simulated placements). Admissions and enrolments are managed in line with discipline strengths and opportunities that support employability throughout the degree. The key to ACUs students' success is that they are sought after and valued by the sectors to which they are destined.

Measures: graduate employment outcomes, employer satisfaction, WIL placements, student satisfaction.

Retention strategies

ACU has processes to monitor students identified as at risk and strategies to increase student completion, including a whole-of-university retention strategy targeting six focus areas: admission and transition, high-quality learning and teaching, student academic development and support, student health, safety, and wellbeing, students at risk and evidence-based practice and continuous improvement.

The University's [retention strategy](#) focuses on:

- re-engagement opportunities for students who have discontinued their enrolment;
- re-recruitment processes for students who have withdrawn; and
- exit interviews with Indigenous students.

Measures: retention, progression, satisfaction, and completion rates.

Admissions transparency

ACU aims to deliver best practices in admissions transparency. Our alternative entry options are clearly articulated on the [ACU Website](#). Academic Board approves all entry criteria for ACU courses. Students can apply directly to ACU and be assessed against the relevant criteria. Faculties conduct regular assessments of the performance of the cohort and review entry criteria based on that assessment.

Graduate Attributes

ACU will introduce new Graduate Attributes in 2022, which focus on student employability and lifelong learning. Included in these attributes is an emphasis on work readiness, contribution to society and empathy. Development of the Graduate Attributes is supported by a number of University-wide projects, including work to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within all curricula. ACU is also introducing a student-centred Community of Practice (CoP) to ensure the students have an opportunity for regular connection with decisions relating to learning and teaching. Recommendations arising from this CoP will be regularly reported to the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC), a subcommittee of the Universities Academic Board.

Student and staff mental health policies

The [ACU Student Mental Health Strategy and Implementation Plan](#) was developed in response to the increasing prevalence and complexity of mental health difficulties among university students. ACU also offers mental health first aid training to all staff, has a policy on [Serious Student Health Conditions](#), and [procedures](#) on managing a student threatening self-harm. Additionally, we focus our pedagogy on active learning in the classroom, scaffolded academic skills development and strategies to enhance student engagement – all factors known to enhance mental health wellbeing in students.

Student return to campus strategy

Student return to campus is being managed consistent with jurisdictional public health orders. ACU is prioritising on-campus scheduling of those classes that cannot be undertaken online (for example, practical clinical teaching in health courses) and then small group classes that allow students to learn with and from one another. In 2021 approximately 60% of scheduled classes are on campus. Campus libraries and student support services remain open, offering a blend of virtual and face to face services to facilitate access for all students.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Research Commercialisation

Our [Strategic Plan](#) establishes the following research priorities:

- translate research into economic, social, environmental, and cultural impacts to positively change our communities;
- forge strong and mutually beneficial local, national, international and industry partnerships and university networks to develop research outcomes that benefit the wider community; and
- activate early career and higher degree research to support our talent pipeline and cultivate professional growth.

To support these priorities, ACU will:

- foster mission-aligned research in partnerships that serve the community;
- develop engagement and impact initiatives over the entire research life cycle; and
- pursue joint industry funded scholarships and end-user co-supervision for Higher Degree Research (HDR) students.

Measures: research translation and commercialisation, HDR industry placements and outcomes.

Cyber Security, Risk management and Disaster Recovery measures

ACU continues dedicated investment to uplift its risk management and cyber/information security capabilities and maturity to provide a safe, secure, and reliable technology landscape and supporting services.

Current in-flight projects include:

- Identity & Access Management, and implementation of Multi-Factor Authentication;
- implementation of a Security Operation Centre (starting July 2021) to minimise breach impacts;
- update internal processes to improve scanning systems for vulnerabilities and system patching maintenance;
- establishing ACU Cyber Security Council to create a mechanism to provide visibility into security program initiatives across ACU;
- improving the Disaster Recovery infrastructure to permit recovery of individual systems

Countering foreign interference

ACU has established a Cyber Security Council with representation across the University to oversee:

- maturity assessment against the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cyber Security Framework;
- an incident response plan as documented in our *Critical Incident Management Policy and Procedures and Privacy Policy and Data Breach Procedure and Response Plan*; and
- adoption and implementation of controls recommended by the Australian Cyber Security Centre's (ACSC) *Strategies to mitigate cybersecurity incidents*.

ACU is implementing a partnership risk assessment tool to identify and manage risks associated with foreign arrangements. Communications, factsheets, and information sessions are available to faculty and research staff, and an internal reporting register is used to enable staff to capture reportable information.

Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act (2020)

ACU has recently made changes to its research management system to capture and record foreign arrangements in accordance with the requirements detailed in the Foreign Relations Act 2020 and the Foreign Arrangements Scheme. Ongoing monitoring of the Attorney General's Transparency Register is in place. ACU has appointed a lead officer to managing its compliance with the Foreign Relations Act 2020.

Measures: NIST Cyber Security Framework, cybersecurity post-incident reviews, ACSC strategies.

IMPROVING STUDENT EQUALITY AND OUTCOMES

Student equity

ACU has a range of initiatives in place (Connect2Uni, Uni Step Up, and Clemente Australia). These programs are designed to support equitable access to higher education and enable students from Indigenous, Low SES, Remote, Regional and Rural backgrounds, and other equity groups to succeed.

Measures: participation rate of Regional, Low SES students and other equity groups, graduate outcomes, and employer satisfaction.

Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students

ACU is implementing a range of strategies to improve success outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, including:

- [ACU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy with a 3% employment rate;](#)
- [ACU's Reconciliation Action Plan;](#)
- [ACU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Success – Belonging Strategy; and](#)
- ACU's Staff Cultural Capability report (in development)

These strategies/plans commit ACU to:

- Strengthen our cultural capability through maintaining culturally safe and inclusive teaching and working environments;
- Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support and advocacy;
- Sponsor all students to enhance/develop their cultural knowledge, leadership, and career opportunities; and
- Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student access, participation, and completion through connections with Indigenous organisations and networks.

Measures: progression, success and completion rates, scholarships, placements, employment rate.

Student and community outreach

- Outreach and community engagement are undertaken through primary and secondary schools. We aim to support teachers' professional development and raise the aspiration of students through a range of activities (Homework Club, Exercise Science Programs).
- Each year ACU engages with 500 schools and 400 career markets across three metropolitans, two regional areas, multiple states, and territories. We provide advice on pathways into University through our staff and student ambassadors and our First Peoples and Equity Pathways team.
- Engage school students in Low SES areas and invite them on campus to Explore Your Future days, where they have a chance to see what University looks and feels like and interact with the university students.

Measures: attendance at careers markets, open days, experience days and student feedback.

Low SES students

ACU is continually enhancing our Widening Participation work with Low SES students, particularly at our Blacktown and Ballarat campuses. Several new initiatives have been implemented, including:

- Connect to Uni – a two-week transition program facilitating the smoother transition of first-year students at Blacktown and Ballarat;
- Peer Mentoring – a new peer mentoring program specifically designed to support and transition students who are first in the family, mature age, return to education, Low SES or in regional areas;
- A significant investment was made in Vygo, a digital mentoring platform to support regional students, and during COVID, when face to face interactions are limited;
- Student Veterans Service – a unique set of support programs for veterans studying at ACU; and
- Uni Step Up, high school pathway to select degrees, free accelerated program for Low SES schools students.

OFFICIAL

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

In the presence of:

by

Dom English

Ryan Kinder

Full name (please print)

Witness (please print)

First Assistant Secretary

A/g Director

Position

Position or profession of witness (please print)

of the Department of Education, Skills and
Employment as delegate of the Minister for
Education and Youth

Signature

Signature

28/12/21

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY LIMITED

In the presence of:

by

Prof. Zlatko Skrbis

Ewa Kluk

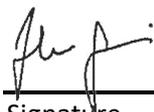
Full name (please print)

Witness (please print)

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature

Signature