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Australian Government

Department of Education,
Skills and Employment

2021-2023 MISSION BASED COMPACT BETWEEN THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA AND **BACHELOR INSTITUTE OF INDIGENOUS TERTIARY EDUCATION**

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 strategic direction of Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) has been articulated by the Institute's Council in the *BIITE Strategic Plan 2020-2022* [[Strategic-Plan-2020-2022_V1.3.pdf \(batchelor.edu.au\)](#)].

The first outcome is to provide outstanding training, research and lifelong education. Success will be achieved and measured through accreditation from TEQSA to deliver an AQF level 7 course, successful delivery of that course, increases in Higher Degree by Research (HDR) enrolments and completions, and by further development of staff research capability and impact.

Second, BIITE will offer what our students, families, partners, communities and economies seek and need. Proven models of community led engagement will be used to cultivate First Nations perspectives, knowledges and wisdom and a decolonising research agenda. This will be measured through BIITE's national thought leadership through national and international forums. This outcome will also be addressed through developing a AQF L7 course responsive to the needs of our students, families and communities, and wider economy, and is measurable through enrolments and student outcomes.

Third, BIITE will strengthen our culture, capability and capacity to meet our values and commitments. BIITE will adopt a holistic approach to well-being of staff and students including direct integration of First Nations culture into our organisational culture such as the continued recognition of the knowledge of Elders and traditional owners. Risk management processes will be enhanced and an updated digital strategy, improving connectivity and reliability of systems across the Institute will be put in place. Success will be measured through staff well-being surveys.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

BIITE values the rights of First Nations peoples to fully participate in, and contribute to, high value dual sector education, training, and research. As such BIITE privileges academic freedom that stimulates First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing. First Nations governance structures and the sovereignty of First Nations elders and traditional knowledge holders, particularly when in contrast to western academic norms of expression and modes of dissemination, must be respected and unrestricted.

BIITE does not currently have a document that equates precisely to the Model Code. Current Institute policies, guidelines and rules, while not being as extensive or logically coherent as the Model Code, are not inconsistent with the principles outlined therein. Work has begun drafting a revised freedom of speech and academic freedom policy.

Consultation In developing this policy is currently focused on how best to express how First Nations sovereignty can be preserved in the context of freedom of speech. The definitions and principles outlined in the Model Code consider the reasonable limitations that can and should be placed on freedom of speech and academic freedom. The functions of BIITE as outlined in the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Act 1999 [[BIITE Act](#)] may reasonably allow restrictions to be placed on speech, actions or behavior that are incompatible, contradictory, or offensive to First Nations culture or practices. BIITE will utilise exemplars of best practice in adapting the Model Code to its requirements, such as *RMIT University's Intellectual Freedom Policy* as outlined in the Walker Review.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

1. **Ensure space for explicit articulation of First Nations knowledges through approaches to teaching and learning and implementation of ongoing professional development for staff.** BIITE will develop curricula designed to produce job ready graduates, whilst privileging First Nations epistemology in teaching and research. These strategies will be designed to provide students with improved labour outcomes, and graduates with a thorough understanding of First Nations-content, informed by First Nations perspectives.
2. **BIITE will continue to prioritise strategies that increase access and opportunity for remote First Nations students.** Further development of alternative and mixed delivery modes, inclusive of a robust, practical learning management system for onsite and remote teaching and learning forms a central component of this outcome. Future course development at post-graduate and under-graduate level will incorporate digital learning. A digital strategy will be introduced to improve connectivity, reliability and functionality, and a digital literacy framework will be introduced for staff and students.
3. **BIITE will develop partnerships to facilitate the development of tailored HDR internship opportunities.** This will allow smooth study to work transitions and improve labour market outcomes for our graduates by embedding work ready practices. The establishment of partnerships with non-traditional industry will be emphasised such as those with interests in renewable energies and other environmental sciences. Internship strategies and opportunities will be interlinked with our current HDR masterclass program. Partnerships and professional networks will be further facilitated through the establishment of a unique alumni programme, with alumni invited to host guest lectures for staff, students and community.

BIITE will develop a mental health strategy. One goal of this document will be to recognise that the importance of culture for the mental health of First Nations students.

BIITE will also work on a return to campus strategy. This document will need to consider how BIITE can best protect First Nations students and the remote communities that many come from.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

1. **BIITE will work to establish a Centre for Indigenous Research, Knowledge and Leadership (CIRKL) governed by a Council of Elders and research leaders. It is envisaged that CIRKL will succeed through long term collaborative partnerships with leading research institutions and individuals, paid internships for PhD candidates, mentoring of staff, development of community researcher positions and hubs in remote and regional communities, and community responsive and informed research projects. The goal is for CIRKL to emerge as a leading force in First Nations specific projects with a National and international reputation.**
2. **Improved outcomes in Australian Research Council (ARC) category 1 grants is a key focus area. BIITE is focused on increasing research capacity within BIITE. The ability to nurture increased levels of research and scholarly activity will be crucial in pursuing this outcome. The appointment of a Dean of Research, increasing internal funding opportunities, and developing partnerships with Universities and appropriate industry partners are mechanisms for achieving these aims.**
3. **BIITE will focus on prioritising increasing opportunity and access to higher education for students whose access is otherwise limited. We will increase our HDR admission and enrolments and grow our small but successful Master of Research and Doctor of Philosophy programs. At the centre of our unique programs is recognition of the richness, diversity, and equivalence of First Nations perspectives and knowledge. First Nations peoples' experiences and ways of working are valued from the commencement of candidature, and individual connections and accountabilities to community are recognised as a fundamental component to produce high-quality research.**

IMPROVING STUDENT EQUALITY AND OUTCOMES

- 1. Ensuring admissions transparency, equity and opportunity. BIITE is currently working to increase the frequency and ability of online admissions and provide further opportunities and frameworks for HDR candidates from non-traditional educational backgrounds and remote communities. Many of our potential candidates are also from older age brackets with history of interrupted access to education. We continue to provide and promote safe and culturally appropriate higher education spaces for First Nations peoples.**
- 2. Ensure that a holistic approach is taken to ensuring student well-being that incorporates cultural, psychological, emotional and physical well-being. A comprehensive student charter will be developed that clearly articulates student rights and responsibilities. Student well-being will be a priority area for the incoming Director of Student Experience who will ensure that a proactive and coordinated approach is taken. BIITE will work towards this goal through the appointment of a Director of Student Experience (commencing 15 November 2021) who will coordinate the various functions (e.g., student travel, student services, student administration) to ensure that student success and wellbeing is paramount. In addition, BIITE will commence work on a cultural framework that will aim to ensure that our students and staff are able to work in a culturally safe environment.**
- 3. Ensure equality of access to higher education for disabled people both through improvements to the physical infrastructure on BIITE's campuses and through ensuring that learning resources are accessible to people with learning disabilities. Where appropriate capital works improvements will be approved to improve access across the campuses. This will include ensuring that access is at the level required by Territory and Commonwealth legislation. Assessment of learning resources to ensure equality of access will be included in quality assurance of learning resources and staff development will be made available. Specifically, this includes the development of learning resources that are accessible to students with dyslexia and dyspraxia.**

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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

6/10/2021

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of
**Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary
Education**

In the presence of:

by

Mick Gooda

Leslie Egan

Full name (please print)

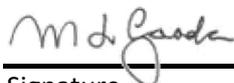
Witness (please print)

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

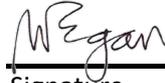
Executive Assistant to the CEO

Position

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature



Signature