



Australian Government
Department of Education,
Skills and Employment

2021-2023 MISSION BASED COMPACT BETWEEN THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA AND CHARLES DARWIN 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

Charles Darwin University (CDU) is a unique multi-campus dual-sector institution serving a region with a dispersed population, 30% of whom are Indigenous. As the University for and of the Territory, we contribute to the future prosperity of Northern Australia through our innovative training, education and research. Our key goals for the next three years are:

Goal 1: A Provider of Transformative Skills and Learning locally, nationally and globally by focussing on expanding student access; enhancing teaching quality; the learning experience; student success; delivering the skills and learning our region needs.

Measures:

- 2.9% pa growth in HE domestic student revenue; 17% pa growth in HE international student revenue
- Student Retention Rate of 75% (non-Indigenous) by 2025
- VET unit success rate of 85% by 2025
- Student satisfaction rates over 80% by 2025

Goal 2: Globally Recognised for Indigenous Leadership by delivering improved outcomes in teaching, research and engagement and playing a key role in the success of Indigenous Australians.

Measures:

- Increase access to HE for Indigenous students in NT to 20% of all new CDU students by 2025
- Indigenous student retention rate of 70% by 2025
- Indigenous VET unit completion rate to 75% by 2025

Goal 3: A Critically Engaged University for the Region by meeting the needs and expectations of our stakeholders; empowering our staff for success; serving regional needs with flagship activities; diversifying our income.

Measures:

- Grow revenue by 5% pa between 2021 and 2023 and 3.5% pa from 2024
- Implementing stakeholder engagement framework

The current Strategic Plan 2021-2026 can be found here: <https://www.cdu.edu.au/sites/default/files/strategic-plan.pdf>

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FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

CDU's Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech policy has now been implemented and is fully compliant with the Walker recommendations <https://www.cdu.edu.au/governance/doclibrary/pol-076.pdf>

CDU's initial Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech policy was approved by Academic Board and Council and implemented in November 2020. During 2020, Professor Sally Walker AM completed a review of Australian universities' alignment with the Model Code on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom recommended by the Hon Mr Robert French AC in his 2019 Review of Freedom of Speech in Australian Higher Education Providers. Professor Walker's review was released on 9 December 2020. Professor Walker's assessment of CDU's policy was that it was "Mostly aligned; some areas not aligned". Four areas of misalignment were identified by Professor Walker. These included some minor wording changes as well as the fact that the policy did not explicitly extend to student representative bodies.

In the early part of 2021, it was proposed by executive management to amend the CDU Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy so that it was fully aligned with the French Model Code. This proposal was endorsed by the CDU Academic Board at its meeting of 24 March 2021, and by the University Council at its meeting of 29 April 2021.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

Goal 1: Development a teaching capability framework that builds professional and digital capabilities to enable lecturers to design and deliver online and hybrid courses for diverse student cohorts. The framework will inform a broader academic expectations framework and specifically address digital capability. Adoption and widespread use of the framework for self-assessment and planning professional development will result in increased student satisfaction rates.

Goal 2: A Retention Steering Committee has identified a set of target courses that are high volume programs with poor semester-to-semester retention rates. Key strategies include improvements in assessment design and student feedback. There is only one target cohort for the next two years: Indigenous students in HE programs (with a focus on both success and retention).

Measures:

HE student retention rate of 75% (non-Indigenous) and 60% (Indigenous), with a long-term aspiration to reach parity.

Goal 3: Development of a bespoke curriculum management system to manage curriculum throughout the entire curriculum lifecycle. The digital platform provides a set of tools to collaboratively and efficiently co-design, monitor and review innovative and quality curriculum to support excellence in teaching and learning. This system will incorporate annual course monitoring, bi-annual rolling course and unit level enhancements, new course development and five yearly comprehensive reviews. Compliance across the product portfolio with CDU policies, procedures, and regulatory standards will result in revenue growth and improved stakeholder engagement.

CDU is committed to Industry engagement, Student retention, Admissions transparency, Student mental health and a Return to campus.

- Labour market outcomes - <https://www.cdu.edu.au/study/why-choose-cdu/our-rankings>
- Industry engagement strategy - <https://www.cdu.edu.au/research-and-innovation/industry-collaboration/partnerships>
- Admissions transparency - <https://www.cdu.edu.au/study/essentials/study-pathways/admission-requirements>
- Retention - <https://www.cdu.edu.au/current-students/life-wellbeing/retention>
- Student mental health - <https://www.cdu.edu.au/current-students/life-wellbeing/staying-well>
- Return to campus - <https://www.cdu.edu.au/news/coronavirus-updates/students>

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RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Goal 1: Research impact on end-users and the community in regional and remote Northern Australia achieved by translation of research into impact through proactive and respectful approaches to engaging participants in research.

Goal 2: Addressing government, industry and community priorities achieved by focussing on our recognised research strengths (Health, Environment, social, public policy and Indigenous affairs, Energy and Resources) addressing government¹, industry and community needs.

Goal 3: Research that delivers economic, social and cultural benefits to Australia's First nation peoples achieved by external end-user advisory bodies for our research institutes, and build on our successful strategy of developing end-user multi partner consortia and co-investment to secure competitive research and innovation funding².

Measures:

Quality Engagement and Impact (EI) ratings in % of our assessed fields of research at 70% by 2026

Research at or above world class in the Fields of Education in which we teach at 60% by 2026

A pilot program to introduce quantitative and qualitative measurement tools will be introduced in 2021.

Commercialisation:

Strategy focusses on identification and development of commercial opportunities in collaboration with industry partners. Our ongoing partnership with the Darwin Innovation Hub provides access to commercialisation and IP management expertise and links to the Commonwealth Entrepreneurs program in the NT for our industry partners. CDU will finalise revisions to its Commercialisation and IP policies and Procedures in 2021.

Compliance:

CDU research management and contractual procedures are compliant with the Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020 and Defence Export Controls³. CDU operates in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Research data security is managed according to CDU policy⁴

Research and training initiatives are included under Goal 3 in the CDU Strategic Plan: <https://editorial.cdu.edu.au/charles-darwin-universitystrategic-plan/>

¹ <https://ntrebound.nt.gov.au/reports/final-report> ; <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/our-north-our-future-white-paper-on-developing-northern-australia>

² <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/drought/future-drought-fund/research-adoption-program/adoption-innovation-hubs/northern-wa-nt-hub>

³ <https://www.cdu.edu.au/governance/doclibrary/pol-067.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.cdu.edu.au/governance/doclibrary/pro-123.pdf>

IMPROVING STUDENT EQUALITY AND OUTCOMES

The University monitors the access, participation, success and completion of students from under-represented backgrounds, with three priority populations for improved support:

1. Indigenous students,
2. students with a disability, and
3. students from regional, rural or remote locations.

These populations have lower success rates than their non-equity counterparts. Work is underway to better support their progress, with a goal of achieving parity in success and retention rates.

CDU's [Indigenous Leadership Strategy](#) (ILS) commits the University to develop innovative programs, ensuring that educational success for Australia's First Nations peoples is everyone's business. Implementation includes several student-focused initiatives to raise aspirations, improve access and support success.

After a long history of retention-focused work, the CDU [Student Transition and Retention Success \(STARS\) Plan](#) was endorsed at Academic Board in early 2021 and defines a series of strategic initiatives designed to lift CDU's HE retention and success rates. Designed to complement the ILS to improve student outcomes for Indigenous students, the STARS plan includes action on high attrition risk courses and high attrition risk cohorts.

To effectively monitor student success, a new series of dashboards monitors success rate variations and trends, and targets form part of individual and team plans. The reports provide an aggregated view of success rate measures and can be viewed by equity cohort, basis of admission and course level.

In addition to this new work, driven by the ILS and STARS Plan, the University will continue to provide key services to support under-represented group, linked here: <https://www.cdu.edu.au/current-students/life-wellbeing>

- Indigenous Leadership Strategy: https://www.cdu.edu.au/files/2020-11/indigenous-leadership-strategy-2020_1.pdf
- Student Transition and Retention Success (STARS) Plan: <https://www.cdu.edu.au/current-students/life-wellbeing/retention>

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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

28/12/2021

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of
CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY

In the presence of:

By

PROFESSOR SCOTT BOWMAN AO

JENNY ROBERTS

~~VICE-CHANCELLOR & PR~~ESIDENT

ASSISTANT VICE-CHANCELLOR



Signature

Signature