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Australian Government

Department of Education,
Skills and Employment

2021-2023 MISSION BASED COMPACT BETWEEN THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA AND SOUTHERN CROSS 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

Southern Cross University was established to promote, within the limits of the University's resources, scholarship, research, free inquiry, the interaction of research and teaching, and academic excellence (Southern Cross University Act 1993). In line with our legislated mission, over the 2021-23 period the University's key priorities are:

- 1. Achieve financial sustainability:** through increased student enrolments, process efficiency, and performance culture. The University has identified a 3.4% net Operating Margin as the measure by which it will ultimately deem this priority met, with a view to securing this result by 2025. Notwithstanding the inherent unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic and its health and economic effects, the University seeks to deliver a strong trend towards an improved Operating Margin (currently negative) over the course of this compact.
- 2. Implement the Southern Cross Academic Model:** The University has identified a strategic need to achieve curriculum reform, distinction and uplift and will achieve this through delivery of the Southern Cross Model. The [Southern Cross Model](#) revolutionises the University's academic teaching, moving the University from a 3 x 13 week Sessions (or trimesters) model to 6 x 6 week Terms. This fundamental shift in delivery will see the University completely reform its curriculum from pedagogical first principles, reduce attrition and improve student engagement. Implementation has commenced in 2021, and will continue throughout 2022 and 2023. Success will be achieved when the University's full undergraduate curriculum is delivered in the 6x6 format by year-end 2023.
- 3. Increase the quality and impact of Southern Cross research:** The University seeks to materially increase its research reputation, income, Field Weighted Citations Index, international co-authorship and industry income. Moreover, it seeks to increase international research collaboration, in a manner that is attuned to and manages the potential risk of foreign interference. Success will be deemed achieved when Southern Cross University achieves measurable increases in Field Weighted Citations and research income.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

In response to the recommendations of the Walker review, the University has taken the following actions to further strengthen its alignment with the Model Code:

- 1. The University's Governance Documents Rule was amended to:**
 - a) require all Rules, Policies, Procedures and Guidelines to be consistent with the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech; and**
 - b) ensure that to the extent of any inconsistency, the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech prevail over any non-statutory policy or rules of the University.**

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2. The [Rules – Student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct Rules](#) were amended to confirm that the exercise of academic freedom or freedom of speech did not constitute misconduct.
3. A requirement for student representative bodies to comply with the University's policies on freedom of speech and academic freedom has been inserted into the standard agreement templates for these bodies.
4. The University is investigating opportunities to inform students about academic freedom and freedom of speech and how the University protects students' academic freedom and their freedom of speech as a part of orientation.

Relevant links:

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Rights and Responsibilities Charter](#)
- [Delegation Rule](#)
- [Events and Facilities Hire Policy](#)
- [Southern Cross University Enterprise Agreement 2018](#)
- [Statement of Academic or Intellectual Freedom](#)
- [Student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct Rules](#)
- [Governance Document Rule](#)
- [Governance Documents Procedures](#)

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

Southern Cross University's [strategic priorities](#) for teaching and learning are to deliver an outstanding teaching and learning experience couched in an inspired student experience. To those ends, the University seeks to improve on key measures of quality, including;

- **Student Satisfaction** as systematically monitored and improved through two key internal measures of course experience satisfaction ([iQILT](#)) and unit satisfaction ([SCU Unit Feedback](#)). Externally, the University benchmarks against and seeks to improve on key measures of quality including national QILT, Student Experience, Course Experience and Destination Surveys and the International Student Barometer.
- **Student performance indicators** as captured in diagnostic analysis completed of cohort performance with the results are reported, monitored and analysed at the *Academic Standards and Quality Committee* (e.g. trend data on attrition/retention, completions, and student achievement profiles) as well as at the *Admissions Committee* (including standing reports English Language Proficiency Equivalency Assessments, Articulation Agreements, benchmarking for non-standard admissions etc.), and at the Educational Partnerships Board.
- **Graduate Outcomes:** as seen in under- and postgraduate full-time graduate outcomes (e.g. employment rates, average salaries in the [Graduate Outcomes Survey \(GOS\)](#)).
- **Employability:** ensuring consistency between University courses and industry expectations. As part of NPILF initiatives, strengthening and/or expanding Work Integrated Learning, industry-focused placements, internships and other professional learning.

Student performance, and in particular retention, is being addressed at the University through the following strategies:

- A fundamental curriculum reform project, moving courses to the [Southern Cross Model](#) is being led by the [Academic Portfolio Office](#) and with support from the [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#), and has included review of curriculum, assessment and teaching Policies and Procedures.

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- A review of Admissions processes and criteria to better understand whether these are set appropriately to admit candidates who are likely to success in their studies. Following the recent [Admissions Transparency Summative Evaluation](#) report published by TEQSA in October 2020. Southern Cross' webpages and current information sets were reviewed and updated against TEQSA's compliance [checklist](#).

A review of Learning Support is underway to better understand the relationship between student achievement and the provision of support services at the institution. Currently, **The Learning and Engagement team** provide a range of [peer to peer](#), [staff to student](#) and [self-help](#) offerings to support a student's learning experience. Learning coaches assist students to become self-managing and self-regulated in their learning. Our [Counselling](#) service provides a free, confidential mental health service.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Southern Cross University's three key priorities for research and research training and innovation are:

- Improve the University's research ranking in the two-digit FOR codes for Engineering, Health and Education by 2030, as well as making any other changes required to meet the TEQSA Threshold Standards for maintenance of 'Australian university'.
Measure: Maintenance of 'Australian university' status.
- Increase quality and impact of research, in terms of reputation, income, FWCI, international co-authorship and industry income
Measure: Research Income and Field Weighted Citations.
- Increase international research collaboration, in a manner that is attuned to and manages the potential risk of foreign interference by undertaking a foreign interference risk assessment.
Measure: Increased staff/student mobility and increased international co-authorship

Research Training and Industry Engagement:

- Co-funded PhD stipends with industries across the region ranging from agriculture, environmental management through to allied health.
- Associate Supervisor Category allows industry representatives to be part of HDRT supervisory panels.
- Liaise with industry to develop PhD programs that address industry needs.
- The Graduate Certificate in Research Management and Communication designed t to engage with industry and recognize the transferrable skills higher degree researchers acquire during their candidature.
Measure: Increased graduate employment rate and initial graduate salary level.
- Cementing new engagement roles, with outreach function, as the primary initial point of contact between industry and researchers to ensure the university is easy for industry to do business with.
Measure: Increased industry engagement, increased funding, increased co-supervision of HDR students, increased co-publication with industry, etc.
- Implementation of a new Research Development Officer position, to design and coordinate a program of training for new and existing researchers on topics such as building new local and international partnerships, innovation and commercialisation.
Measure: Increased projects with industry, increased co-publication with industry

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Innovation and Research Commercialisation

- Utilising our research, technical and infrastructure assets to undertake commercial work for various industries and individuals involved in agriculture, land management and natural plant product enterprises.

Measure: Commercial income from these activities is reinvested to support the University's analytical and research asset maintenance costs, to ensure increased financial sustainability of the University's research.

- Liaise with industry to develop and expand research expertise and infrastructure to address contemporary issues and opportunities in environmental and agricultural sectors.

Measure: Increased industry engagement, e.g. increased funding, increased co-supervision of HDR students, increased co-publication with industry, etc. and opportunities for innovation and commercialisation.

IMPROVING STUDENT EQUALITY AND OUTCOMES

Supporting Students from Low SES background

Equity Scholarships and Bursaries for students are provided as a cash payment ranging from \$500.00 to \$2000.00 depending on a student's enrolment load. Students experiencing financial hardship because of ongoing COVID-19 circumstances are eligible for payment of a one-off bursary scholarship of up to \$500. <https://www.scu.edu.au/scholarships/equity-scholarships/>

Students with a disability

The University's Student Equity & Inclusion unit promotes the personal growth and development of students with disability by facilitating the provision of reasonable adjustments, and supporting and educating the university community in matters relating to disability. Support services are aligned to case management processes, including screening, consultation & assessment, advocacy, developing an individual Learning Access Plan (LAP) outlining the recommendations for tailored reasonable adjustments, sourcing and implementing the adjustments and monitoring and reviewing the student's LAP. <https://www.scu.edu.au/current-students/services-and-support/student-equity--inclusion/>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait students

Students identifying as first nations provided culturally-aligned tutor support and access to a sensitively appointed mentor through our Gnibi College for Indigenous Studies. <https://www.scu.edu.au/media/scueduau/current-students/services/iass/ITAS-Student-Application-Form.pdf>

In 2022, the University will launch a new suite of Indigenous scholarships designed to provide increased financial support for Indigenous students.

Outreach

Senior students in secondary schools within the Northern Rivers and Tweed regions engaged, prepared and informed about tertiary options through online (due to COVID) programs to excite them and to enhance their understanding of life as a student and the benefits of university study.

<https://www.scu.edu.au/engage/student-equity-and-inclusion/schools-and-community-outreach-program/>

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**SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

By

Dom English

Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary

Position

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

Signature

28/12/2021

Date

**SIGNED for and on behalf of
Southern Cross University**

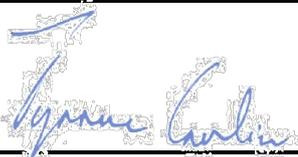
by

Tyrone Carlin

Full name (please print)

Vice Chancellor

Position



Signature

In the presence of:

Ryan Kinder

Witness (please print)

A/g Director

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

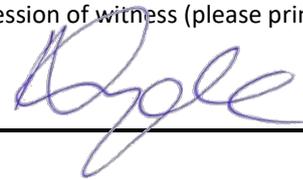
In the presence of:

Nicholas Hyde

Witness (please print)

Director Office of the Vice Chancellor

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature