



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

**2021-2023 MISSION BASED COMPACT BETWEEN THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA AND
UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST**

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

USC's mission is "Enriching our regions, connecting with our communities and creating opportunities for all". This mission informs [USC's Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#). Three key outcomes of the Strategic Plan will be:

1. To have inspired people to achieve their ambitions through education ('Opportunity'), and to have enabled more people to work, contribute, and innovate in their local and global communities ('Employability')

Key 'opportunity' achievement

- Improved tertiary education access, participation and success

Measures

- Increased student enrolments
- Improved student experience
- Improved student retention rate compared to the national benchmark

Key 'employability' achievement

- Produced graduates who are skilled, future-ready, socially responsible, entrepreneurial, and in-demand contributors to their communities

Measures

- Improved graduate employment outcomes
- Increased student completions
- Improved employer satisfaction

These goals will be delivered through USC's Academic Plan (internal access only, but available on request).

2. To have produced research outcomes that make a difference ('Research Impact')

Research impact achievement

- Undertaking research that is strategically aligned, regionally beneficial and globally impactful

Measures

- Increased engagement and impact performance (with annual target for relevant HERDC income categories)
- Improved national and international rankings, including ERA performance

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This goal will be delivered through USC's Research Plan (internal access only, but available on request).

3. To have empowered communities thrive through dynamic and productive partnerships ('Engagement')

Engagement achievement

- Forge powerful industry, government, regional and global partnerships

Measures

- Improved regional impact
- Maintained or improved performance for Times Higher Education's university global impact assessment (SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals)

This goal will be delivered through USC's Engagement Plan (internal access only, but available on request).

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

In August 2020, USC formally adopted the *Model Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers* (Model Code) and implemented a new [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom - Governing Policy](#). In addition, a number of other policy documents were updated to achieve greater alignment with the Model Code. The Walker Review (December 2020) highlighted that USC's policies were fully aligned to the Model Code.

In June 2021, USC amended its [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom - Governing Policy](#) to ensure that the definition of academic freedom aligned with the new definition of academic freedom in the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

USC remains highly committed to the freedom of speech and academic freedom. The development of the new policy on freedom of speech and academic freedom, as well as amendments to existing policies, involved staff consultation and discussion at relevant university committees. Policy approvals were obtained in accordance with the University's [Policy Framework – Governing Policy](#) and are available from the policy repository on USC's website.

Links to the relevant policy documents are available below:

- [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom – Governing Policy](#)
- [Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct - Governing Policy](#)
- [Learning and Teaching - Academic Policy](#)
- [Responsible Research Conduct - Governing Policy](#)
- [Hire of University Facilities – Operational Policy](#)

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

USC's teaching and learning priorities are:

1. Quality curriculum

Initiatives

- Develop quality academic products, informed by industry
- Ensure all curriculum meets design principles
- Enhance academic product offerings using [technologies, simulation, visualisation, and AI](#)

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- Support students to build capabilities to improve graduate employment outcomes

Measures

- Increased number of products co-created with industry
- Improved eVALU8 results determined by number of courses in 'top tier' for overall satisfaction

2. [Work Integrated Learning \(WIL\)](#)

Initiatives

- Extend and enhance WIL provision
- Introduce standards for industry partner workplace facilitators

Measures

- Implemented WIL survey to measure satisfaction and annual targets met
- Increased variety of WIL opportunities available in all bachelor level programs

3. **Employability**

Initiatives

- Implement the [academic standards performance framework](#) and integrate across all related USC performance processes
- Reinvigorate the Academy of Learning and Teaching and implement processes for best practice
- Enhance the delivery of teaching by both industry experts and research-led discipline experts
- Develop, recognise and reward staff who are expert users of our teaching environments and support innovation
- Upskill academic staff to design active, authentic curriculum that supports students in preparation for the workplace

Measures

- Underperforming programs and courses identified and rationalised
- Improved recognition of staff with [Advanced HE](#)
- Improved teaching quality outcomes from the SES results

USC has developed a toolkit (internal access only) to support the [health](#) and [wellbeing](#) of students, and strategies for both staff and [student mental health and wellbeing](#). Robust [policies and procedures](#) are in place for a safe, inclusive, diverse and supportive learning environment.

USC's [Admissions, Enrolments and Graduation – Academic Policy](#), provides a broad framework and a set of principles for determining admission, enrolment and graduation for coursework programs of the University.

USC students returned to campus in early 2021, and USC continues to enhance flexible, quality on-campus and online teaching and ensures admissions transparency.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

USC's research and innovation priorities are:

1. **Critical mass and developing capacity**

Initiatives

- Consolidate existing [research strengths](#), improve integration with USC's schools
- Develop new, emerging and regionally relevant research areas
- Strategic recruitment of research capacity-building academic staff in focus areas

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- Enhance research enterprise processes, systems, and service capabilities
- Foster research engagement via regionally relevant and distinctive research focus areas

Measures

- Increased research income by area
- Increased publication citation impact by area

2. Researcher partnerships

Initiatives

- Establish and support HDR partnership arrangements with national and international universities
- Create end-user [research partnerships](#) focused on impactful [applied research](#)
- Promote knowledge transfer of USC's IP in conjunction with end-user organisations

Measures

- Increased co-authored [research publications](#) (international universities, industrial partners)
- Increased patents, commercial revenue-based IP licences and [commercialisation](#) income
- Increased [Category 3 research income](#)

3. Researcher development framework

Initiatives

- Attract and retain high quality HDR students with comprehensive and engaged supervisory teams
- Promote an integrated approach to HDR processes, systems and support
- Increase frequency, intensity, and reach of supervisor development
- Provide a research leadership and management development program
- Augment the USC early career researcher program
- Develop an innovation and entrepreneurship workshop training program to enhance USC's research engagement and impact agenda

Measures

- Increased timely HDR completions as a proportion of total completions
- Improved end-user engaged HDR students
- Improved HDR graduate outcomes and experience
- Improved participation in researcher development programs

USC continually uplifts its processes to address emerging countering foreign interference and cybersecurity risks. It implemented priority actions in response to the recommendations in UFIT's Guidelines and is currently developing a cybersecurity strategy in alignment with the NIST framework.

IMPROVING STUDENT EQUALITY AND OUTCOMES

USC's key priorities for improving student equality and outcomes are:

1. Access and pathways

Initiatives

- Enhance the range of [pathways](#) offered into a USC degree and embed opportunities in undergraduate programs for postgraduate progression.
- Foster strong relationships with online program partners to ensure growth in numbers of students studying online
- Introduce microcredit and short courses to enable lifelong learning

Measures

- Increased articulation from pathway programs
- Increased student enrolments in online programs
- Improved student enrolments in postgraduate programs

2. Student diversity

Initiatives

- Develop an international strategy to expand and diversify [international student enrolments](#)
- Strengthen USC's [widening participation](#) activities to increase the diversity of our students
- Implement the [Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2021-2023](#) and the [Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021-2024](#)
- Continue to support students from diverse backgrounds through the University's [bursary and scholarship schemes](#)
- Implement USC's [Indigenous Engagement Framework](#) across our campus communities
- Partner with [Indigenous community](#) organisations including recognised Traditional Owners, the community and business sectors

Measures

- Increased international student enrolments
- Maintain national access averages for groups underrepresented in higher education
- Annual increase in commencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments by region
- Partnerships established and maintained with organisations based in local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

3. Student success

Initiatives

- Meet USC and sector standards for all online, on campus, and in workplace interactions
- Provide a student-focused, learning-centred experience, supported by technology and in partnership with students, to improve the design and delivery of learning, enhance student engagement and maximise student success
- Maximise student success by monitoring engagement and progression; develop strategies to [support students](#)
- Provide enriching student experiences that create a sense of belonging at USC

Measures

- Improved internal student retention
- Improved student success rate

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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
UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST

In the presence of:

by

Professor Helen Bartlett

Sheree Hackwood

Full name (please print)

Witness (please print)

Vice-Chancellor and President

Executive Support Officer

Position

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Helen Bartlett

S. Hackwood

Signature

Signature