



Australian Government

Department of Education and Training

**2017 Mission Based Compact  
Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Murdoch 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 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 which includes that year.

**MISSION**

The Murdoch University Strategic Plan 2012-2017 has driven a 21st century vision of Murdoch as a leading international research-led university pursuing excellence in select areas of knowledge production and dissemination.

Within the framework provided by the Strategic Plan, Murdoch's core priorities are:

- The production of internationally competitive leading edge, blue sky and translational research;
- High quality teaching and learning through the delivery of world-class degree courses; and
- Promotion of societal engagement and knowledge partnerships at the local, national and international levels

Murdoch University is actively engaging with Indo-Asia-Pacific as the region grows and opens new opportunities for research, teaching and institutional engagement. At the local level, Murdoch will act as the 'knowledge hub' in the development of the Murdoch Specialised Activity Centre (MSAC) which incorporates a tertiary teaching hospital, private hospital, medical research hub, TAFE campus, and business district collocated with the University. Recent changes to the Murdoch University Act will enable the university to enter into commercial arrangements to develop the eastern side of the campus, known as the Eastern Precinct. The Eastern Precinct will connect people, business and industry, research and innovation, nature and technology to create a community that fosters and stimulates the pursuit of knowledge, innovation and excellence.

Murdoch has initiated the process of developing the next phase of the Strategic Plan 2017 to 2027, and a series of workshops and consultation sessions has already occurred.

The refreshed Strategic Plan will build on the previous one, sharpening the emphasis on innovation in all aspects of university activity, while strengthening financial sustainability as the priority for the early years. Innovation in teaching will capture technological advances and up-to-date pedagogy, develop new curriculum, and encourage staff to innovate within a framework that is tolerant of managed risk. Translational research, with strong industry collaboration, has been a strategic focus for Murdoch. The emphasis on innovation and commercialisation will be strengthened and refined to deliver economic outcomes in key research areas.

Student load growth, refining and strengthening of selected research programs, and development of Murdoch's land assets are core elements of ongoing financial sustainability.

International connectedness will be encouraged through the enhancement of strategic collaborations and partnerships, with a view to enhancing our reputation as an internationally networked university that is a collaborator of choice in a small number of key areas of excellence. This will also create value for students and alumni through a global collaborative focus that delivers impact.

Murdoch will help shape, empower and connect students to be adaptive, creative and ready for their long-term careers and lives solving wicked problems in a wider, changing world. In order to do so, Murdoch will expand and reinforce student support to increase student satisfaction, progression and completion with a focus on employability. New and

unique offerings will be developed to meet changing workforce demands, incorporating the growth of digital learning, international study placements and work integrated learning.

Research quality and capacity will be enhanced by investment in enabling technologies, using strategic collaborative partnerships in Australia and Asia. Building on existing research strengths, Murdoch aims to be recognised as a world leader in research across the translational pipeline in key areas of local, national and global significance.

Through these broader mechanisms, Murdoch will demonstrate our distinctiveness in the global higher education market and thereby increase visibility and international standing.

## **INNOVATION**

Murdoch has a long tradition of multi and trans-disciplinary academic practice that underpins meaningful research partnerships and collaborations. This is demonstrated through a strong translational focus in current research and future growth areas, including areas such as biosecurity, food production and water security, and an expanding emphasis on public policy engagement nationally and in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. An expanded range of translational research will be developed by looking at how research might meet the needs of relevant local, national and international communities, including their component businesses, industry, and their sustainable development.

In the new Strategic Plan the emphasis on innovation and commercialisation will be strengthened and refined to deliver economic outcomes in key research areas. These areas are:

- Health Futures, capturing Public Health and Infectious Disease, One Health and Precision Medicine as well as associated Health Policy and Service Delivery;
- Food Innovations, with the policy intent of enhancing nutritious food production, and food and water safety and security, areas of focus include Sustainable Farming, Grain Innovations, Biosecurity and Animal Production.
- Responsible Development, incorporating Minerals, Water and Energy, Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecosystems, Food Security, and Public Policy, Political Economy, Education and Engagement.

Murdoch University has established strong research ties in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, building research centres and multinational teams from individual research projects. For example, Murdoch established the Singapore Centre for Research in Innovation, Productivity and Technology (SCRIPT) which acts as a conduit and facilitator for Singapore and regionally focused research with an overarching food security and technology themes. Working with industry and government agencies in Singapore, SCRIPT is addressing issues around supply chain, trade, market access, business model innovation, and technologies in food processing. Murdoch has also established three joint research centres with Tier 1 universities in China focused on wheat improvement, biotic and antibiotic stress in agriculture and forestry, and veterinary epidemiology.

The University also houses the WA Phenome Centre which utilises the latest technological advances in the field of metabolomics to identify the unique chemical fingerprints that are produced by cells in the body during both health and disease. The Phenome Centre is part of an international network of world-leading Phenome Centres in North America, Europe and Asia. It is the only centre focussed specifically on infant and child health and is working on projects ranging from preterm infant sepsis, childhood ear disease, lung infections and cardiovascular development.

Industry links in the region and nationally continue to develop. The Murdoch Specialised Activity Centre will connect people and technology to create a community that fosters and stimulates the pursuit of knowledge, innovation and excellence. Regional projects, such as the Nambelup Industrial Area east of Mandurah, have an innovation focus, particularly intensive agriculture and water management, and Murdoch has links with government and industry through research programs to manage the environmental factors in infrastructure development as well as input to workforce development.

Building from these existing government and industry links, strategic collaborations and partnerships with industry and other end users will be strengthened or established to enhancing our capacity to attract industry-linked research in a small number of key areas of excellence, as indicated above, and to encourage commercialisation of research.

Research and innovation capacity will be strengthened by investment in enabling technologies, where appropriate using strategic collaborative partnerships in Australia and Asia. Enabling technologies will facilitate research across the

translational pipeline that addresses issues of local, national and global significance.

Murdoch's underpinning People & Culture Strategy will encourage staff to innovate within a framework that is tolerant of managed risk. The Research and Innovation Office will implement structures and performance measures that support a strengthened industry focus, while ensuring that investigator-driven research remains a core component of research output. Staff are supported in developing research-industry engagement through the *Start Something* program, conducted in association with investor-led start up supporters, Innovation Cluster and Atomic Sky. The program comprises commercialisation awareness events and a workshops program led by industry mentors, focusing on the stages of education, business modelling, validation and the commercialisation process. It provides a cohesive framework supporting industry connectivity that promotes entrepreneurship. All these measures will be supported by a budget model that is revised to reinforce appropriate activity across campus.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Murdoch University provides a rich and diverse academic learning experience with a curriculum integrally linked to quality research and up-to-date pedagogy, equipping students with life-long learning skills and the capacities to successfully engage in a global world.

Strategies are in place to grow undergraduate student load, both domestically and for onshore and offshore international students. New and unique offerings, that are contemporary and appealing, will be developed to meet changing workforce demands, incorporating the growth of digital learning and career ready learning. All undergraduate degrees are required to provide clear pathways beyond the bachelor degree to employment, research training, or postgraduate coursework.

Financial sustainability is a stimulus for diversifying income sources which requires reducing relative reliance on undergraduate domestic students. As Murdoch is seeking to expand undergraduate domestic load, this will need to be outpaced by growth in international load and postgraduate coursework enrolments. Murdoch will review its suite of postgraduate coursework programs with a view to developing new qualifications that are high quality, internationally competitive, reflect the long-term needs of both students and employers, and are in proven and emerging areas of demand. This requires reinvigoration of curriculum design, assessment, pedagogy and delivery methods to ensure they are appropriate to meet the specific learning needs of students.

The success of the State Government's creation of a strategic activity centre in the suburb of Murdoch depends on harnessing the intellectual capital of the University as well as the existing St John of God Private Hospital and the Fiona Stanley Hospital. Murdoch will review and renew its undergraduate course offerings in clinical and allied health sciences at the Perth and Mandurah campuses in the light of State Government workforce planning that indicates shortages in skilled health professionals, with particular emphasis on the needs of the Health precinct. This has included areas such as aged care nursing, rehabilitation science as well as high demand courses in psychology, sports science, exercise physiology and physical education (teaching) and additional new programs are being explored.

Further opportunities for postgraduate coursework programs that reflect our teaching and research strengths will be identified and assessed for introduction, including areas such as rehabilitation science and nursing specialities. While the majority of programs will be offered on a fee-paying basis, some programs aligned to areas of skill shortage with lower remuneration may be put forward for consideration for CGS funding.

Further consideration will be given to converting some existing undergraduate courses to professional graduate programs, subject to the availability of Commonwealth-supported places at the postgraduate level. It should be noted that the decision to retain degrees in Education, Engineering, Nursing and Laws at the undergraduate level at present does not imply that these qualifications will not be moved to the postgraduate level in the future. With a view to international and national trends, it may be desirable to review the positioning of these degrees at a future date.

Murdoch will expand and reinforce student support as a whole-of-university imperative to increase student satisfaction, progression and completion. Student data and analysis, including student analytics, are being developed and enhanced to both support and direct institutional action. Analytics will be developed to identify at-risk students and manage interventions. Learning analytics will also support personalised student learning.

Engagement with the university community other than through their studies enhances successful student outcomes (retention and completion). Murdoch is developing a major student hub on the Perth campus incorporating social learning

spaces, food and beverage outlets and common facilities. School-based mentoring programs, enhancement of student associations within Schools, and Guild-based activities to strengthen clubs, societies and volunteer groups continue to be supported. These initiatives aim to strengthen student engagement and the student community.

Murdoch has implemented PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions) to help students succeed in more than twenty particularly challenging subjects. PASS is a free, voluntary academic assistance program that helps students to build new study and learning skills while also creating or strengthening social networks. It has also piloted the PAC (Peer Academic Coach) Scheme to support student learning through a centrally based peer led triage system to provide just in time support for simple needs and a signposting process for the more complex queries.

A focus on career and goal orientation from enrolment through to graduation is being reinforced, recognizing that this is a key driver of student success and retention.

The Centre for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) provides integrated and coordinated leadership and support in teaching and learning to students and academic staff at Murdoch University and strategic advice to the schools on teaching and learning matters.

CUTL manages staff development, including the Scholarly Practice of Academic staff (SPA) course which is compulsory for all tenure-tracked Murdoch academics who need to complete their probation requirements. The course comprises a series of modules that aim to orient staff to the Murdoch institutional context and its philosophical approach; identify and promote scholarly practice in teaching and research; and support Murdoch's aim to develop students who are global scholars.

The University Certificate in Learning and Teaching provides a practical teaching course for staff to develop their practice in a supported environment. It enables staff on track for academic probation to meet the teaching course requirement. The course meets the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education as set down by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). This confers eligibility for the award of Associate Fellowship or Fellowship of the Academy.

## **RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING**

Murdoch University is a research-led institution with a reputation for world class research in select areas of knowledge, with over 85% of research being assessed at world standard or better in the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) assessment. The University aims to be recognised as a world leader in research across the translational pipeline in key areas of local, national and global significance.

A strategic approach is taken to building research and innovation capacity through concentrating on a select number of research domains with the aim to excel internationally in these areas. As indicated in the Innovation section, these domains are Health Futures, Food Innovations, and Sustainable Development.

Within these domains, research capacity will be strengthened by enhancing existing areas of research excellence, restoring some areas that may have stalled and actively pursuing several new areas of research activity, as well as determining those areas to vacate.

Research depth will be enriched through recruitment, workload, development and promotion strategies. Active recruitment strategies will be implemented that target scholars with a PhD from institutions with an international reputation for research excellence whose research enhances or complements the defined research domains.

The range of translational research projects will be developed by looking at the local environment and how research might have an impact on the community, including business, industry, and the broader population. These collaborative projects will add depth to the defined research domains, particularly through the unique research opportunities provided by the establishment of a collocated Health Precinct in areas such as health, biomedicine and related areas including bioinformatics. Strategies will seek to increase the funding of research positions, projects and HDR students by local entities, as well as providing opportunities for secondments and industry and community based HDR students.

Expanding local and international collaborations will also expand mechanisms for supporting research that make the University resilient to external funding policy changes and adaptable to national and global needs. This will ensure that

Murdoch is able to develop research areas while maintaining support for identified areas of excellence and emerging strength.

Based on the need to support recognised strategic areas of research, Murdoch will identify structures, infrastructure and facilities to strengthen capacity in enabling technologies and develop a management plan to source and maintain that capacity. Opportunities for joint development of facilities or to 'piggyback' strategic infrastructure on commercial developments in the Murdoch Activity Centre will be used where appropriate, as will models of national and international collaboration.

#### Research Training

Research training continues to be fundamental to the research effort at Murdoch. This reflects the deeper embedding of research into the culture of all parts of the University.

Compulsory research skills units are integrated into all bachelor degree programs. Together with a requirement that all undergraduate majors demonstrate a clear progression of study opportunities beyond the bachelor degree, specifically including HDR pathways, there is a pool of talented graduates with the skills to successfully undertake HDR.

Through the creation of a high quality PhD and postdoctoral development environment, Murdoch will increase PhD student load over 2017. In line with the University's focus on internationalisation, a significant proportion of these will be international students.

Murdoch proactively works to attract industry, philanthropic and corporate support for HDR scholarships which provides funding and in some cases secondary support for candidates. The focus is on the University's strategic research domains and will therefore assist in building the HDR profile in areas of established or emerging strength.

HDR completions will be facilitated by enhancing the quality of supervision, improved candidature management and strengthening student support. Programs for supervisors place particular emphasis on ethics, experienced research practice and mentoring, aiming to promote collaboration and interaction between supervisors and relevant staff across the University.

Enhancement of the HDR experience is a key component of strengthening the broad research environment at Murdoch. The GREAT (Graduate Research Education and Training) program provides a range of courses and workshops designed to provide generic skills training and support for postgraduate research students. This provides a formal support structure that caters for students at different stages of candidature – from thesis topic formulation through conference presentations to analysing data and condensing the final thesis.

The Murdoch University Postgraduate Student Association (MUPSA) is a valuable resource for postgraduate students. They offer additional seminars, conferences and social activities as well as advocacy on behalf of postgraduate students. SSAF support for MUPSA has facilitated enhanced support and student experience initiatives, working more closely with the University.

#### **EQUITY**

Murdoch will continue to provide opportunities for able students, who would not have the expectations of attending university, to access undergraduate education and support them in retention and completion. The University takes a holistic, student-centred approach to teaching and learning that encompasses:

- opportunities for all school leavers – from academically talented school leavers through to those facing educational disadvantage;
- encouraging students from diverse backgrounds;
- strong student support, both academic and pastoral; and
- curriculum that includes opportunities for international exchange, meaningful Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences and a capstone academic experience.

Murdoch engages with its community, particularly in Rockingham, Kwinana and Mandurah and increasingly in regional WA, in a meaningful way to promote tertiary aspirations, facilitate university entry and provide support to help students successfully complete tertiary qualifications.

The University is undertaking a review the provision of services to equity students in 2016 that will underpin revised strategies which may include administrative restructure, changes in support technology (CRM) and consideration of strategic priorities for support.

#### Aboriginal Student Support

Murdoch University acknowledges that its campuses are situated on *Nyungar Boodjar* and that the Wadjuk people of the Noongar nation are the traditional custodians of the land on which it stands. Murdoch respects and acknowledges the traditional and continuing spiritual relationship, cultural heritage practices and beliefs that form *Kura, yeye, boorda* (the past, present and future).

The University's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, provides the framework for strategy and action for Aboriginal development and engagement, with strategies aimed at the:

- Promotion of knowledge of the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the University;
- Promotion and development of career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons;
- Development of strategies to increase Aboriginal employment at the University to levels that reflect the demographic representation of Aboriginal people in the workforce in Western Australia (including employment targets, and timeframes); and
- Develop a research environment at the University that is culturally sensitive, responsive to Aboriginal communities and recognises and enhances Aboriginal research.

Aligned to the RAP framework is the University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy. The Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre (KAC) provides a high level of support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including physical resources such as access to study spaces, and/or computers and peripheral equipment; tutorial assistance; and study support.

To facilitate aspiration-raising among Aboriginal students, Murdoch offers a 13-week core program and a four-day intensive outreach program in partnership with the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) program. The program utilises University students to mentor Aboriginal students in high schools to give them the skills, opportunities, belief and confidence to finish school at the same rate as their peers and to think more broadly about post-school options.

A range of entry pathways are available to cater for Aboriginal students from both traditional school-leaver and non-traditional academic backgrounds. These aim to provide access to degree studies while also contributing to increased success and retention by equipping students with the appropriate skills and knowledge for their chosen field of study. The signature program is K-Track which assists students to gain entry to undergraduate study with two entry points depending upon the performance of the student. The course is designed to not only help Indigenous people develop the skills necessary for success at university, but also to have them realise how empowering being a successful student can be. Following successful completion of K-Track, students are then directly enrolled into an undergraduate degree.

Additional academic assistance programs are being considered modelled on the existing *Waardong* program offered in the School of Veterinary and Life Sciences. This program teaches Orientation Chemistry for students without a background in chemistry, and provides supplementary enabling units for students throughout their veterinary or other health science studies.

#### Support for students from a Low Socio Economic background and other equity groups

Murdoch has a student cohort that is strongly influenced by the location of its campuses. The sphere of influence of these campuses includes regional areas, commuter communities, significant Low SES populations and a sizeable fly-in-fly-out population. This gives rise to a student population that includes proportionally higher cohorts than sector averages of Low SES students, students with a disability, Indigenous students, students from a Non English speaking background, first in family students, students who have delayed enrolment and students aged over 25. Together these indicate a significant proportion of Murdoch's student population with both historical and ongoing educational disadvantage.

Western Australia has the lowest propensity to apply to University education by secondary school graduates in the country, as illustrated in the table below.

State & Territory	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
NSW/ACT	59.4%	61.1%	61.5%	60.2%	59.9%
VIC	69.7%	73.1%	67.4%	68.3%	67.1%
QLD	49.7%	50.3%	51.0%	50.4%	50.9%
WA	48.5%	49.6%	49.8%	51.4%	47.6%
SA/NT	56.3%	65.4%	64.2%	66.2%	65.9%
TAS	59.8%	62.2%	63.2%	61.1%	59.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58.5%</b>	<b>60.8%</b>	<b>59.8%</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>59.4%</b>

Note: Propensity to apply is calculated by dividing the number of current Year 12 home state applicants aged 20 or less by number of Year 12 students aged 20 or less in each state and territory

In addition, structural changes to the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) have resulted in a cohort of students who do not qualify for direct entry to the university because they have not obtained an ATAR. Indeed, at Coodanup College, a school in Mandurah with a high proportion of Low SES and indigenous students, there was not a single student on an ATAR pathway in 2015. Murdoch is working with the school to address the challenges they face.

*These factors combine to entrench educational disadvantage among people from a Low SES background in Western Australia. This needs to be addressed in a comprehensive way at a national level by the COAG Education Council.*

For its part, Murdoch University engages with its community in a meaningful way to promote tertiary aspirations, facilitate university entry and provide support to help students successfully complete tertiary qualifications. This has been strengthened through individual programs within the "Building Aspirations and Learning Links for Young People to go to University" project funded by the Commonwealth.

Murdoch is the leader in WA for the attracting Low SES students, with 19% of undergraduate student load from low socioeconomic background.

In order to meet the demand for enabling programs, Murdoch aims to expand the OnTrack pathway to university. 'OnTrack' enabling program is an on-campus, pre-university course designed to assist people from disadvantaged or disrupted educational backgrounds to enable their entry to university. The course consists of three modules that develop the generic skills, knowledge and values required for successful university learning. Students who require support in English as a Second Language receive additional tutoring. It is conducted at all three campuses (Perth, Rockingham and Mandurah) each semester. The Program is very successful, with 75% of student completing the program and 71% going on to enrol in a Murdoch University degree. A new version, 'Flexi-Track', will launch in December 2016, offering a flexible blended and online enabling pathway for those unable to access the on-campus course offering.

Cohort analysis demonstrates that OnTrack is successful in broadening access to higher education with students more likely to be from a low socioeconomic background (29.1% by postcode measure in 2015) than the full undergraduate cohort (19.0% in 2015).

Despite the success of OnTrack and Murdoch's success in raising aspirations, it is disadvantaged relative to other WA universities in the proportion of funded enabling places, as illustrated in the table below.

University	Funded Enabling Places	Undergraduate CGS Load	Ratio of Funded Enabling Places to CGS Load	2015 Enabling Load	Enabling Over Allocation Ratio
Curtin	838	19117	0.044	1085	1.294
ECU	656	11117	0.059	774	1.179
UWA	167	11736	0.014	38	0.227
Murdoch	217	7238	0.030	289	1.331

This has led Murdoch to consistently over-enrol its OnTrack program and in 2016, Murdoch further increased its over-enrolment in enabling programs, with the over allocation ratio of enabling load for 2016 being **2.024**.

*As a result, Murdoch will be seeking additional enabling places into the future to allow it to expand its access pathways, thereby helping reduce the participation gap with other states, and help reduce unemployment in the local region.*

Of critical importance in the successful transition to university study is the development of the appropriate 'cultural capital'. This requires academic support, pastoral care and financial assistance working together to enhance the 'educational resilience' of students. As indicated above, the increased use of learning analytics will help identify the specific support needs of students.

The allocation and funding of scholarships for domestic undergraduate students enables the targeting of financial support Murdoch is able to provide to students in need, with a view to promoting increased participation and retention from these student cohorts. In addition to scholarships based on individual circumstances, Murdoch offers support based on course or study area and on location to encourage participation of students who might not otherwise attend university.

The changing demography of WA's regional areas is demonstrated in the strength of Murdoch's increase in enrolment of regional students without a parallel increase in Low SES enrolments. The assumed nexus between regionality and Low SES status is not borne out by Murdoch's enrolment pattern and will be taken into account in the design of equity programs.

Murdoch has managed its student cohort effectively over many years with positive outcomes for students and strong quality assurance. Indeed, these student cohorts are attracted by Murdoch's strong track record in successful completion by students 'like them'.

SIGNED for and on behalf of

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by

Dom English  
Full name (please print)

Group Manager  
Position

of the Department of Education and Training as  
delegate of the Minister for Education and  
Training.

Dom English  
Signature

14/12/2017  
Date

In the presence of:

Cate Hutchinson  
Witness (please print)

Policy Officer  
Position or profession of witness (please print)

C G Hutchinson  
Signature

SIGNED for and on behalf of

UNIVERSITY

Professor Eeva Leinonen  
Full name (please print)

Vice Chancellor  
Position

Eeva Leinonen  
Signature

In the presence of:

Allison Hymas  
Witness (please print)

ED to VC  
Position or profession of witness (please print)

A Hymas  
Signature