Australian Government
Department of Education

2019 Mission Based Compact **Between the Commonwealth of Australia and the University of Newcastle**

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

In this section the University should refer to information on:

- *its primary focus over the term of this compact*

The **student experience** and **service to our communities** and our regions are at the centre of our new strategic plan, and our focus is anchored to our responsibilities to these stakeholders. We will look to reimagine our campuses with a focus on student experience and connecting with our communities and regions, shape our curriculum to further enhance the skills and employability of our graduates, focus our teaching and research into domains of strength and emerging challenges that are responsive to the needs of our regions, including the need for new industries, jobs and greater educational attainment, and commit to expanding on our partnerships and collaboration with the Asia Pacific.

- *its values and aspirations, what it does and how it can best serve the interests of its students, staff and key stakeholders*

The University of Newcastle launched its new Strategic Plan, *Looking Ahead* in March 2020. The plan commits to delivering an exceptional student experience, preparing graduates for life in an increasingly connected society, and serving our regions by taking research that matters to the world and bringing our global expertise home. The plan is built around six core pillars:

- A commitment to Indigenous education
- Engagement priorities: Healthier Living; Next Generation Resources: Connected Communities; Growing Industries
- Life Ready Graduates
- Asia Pacific Focus
- Reimagining our Campuses
- Inspiring People

The plan articulates the University's values as:

- Excellence;
- Equity;
- Engagement, and;
- Sustainability

Under the plan all undergraduate programs will feature work-integrated learning opportunities, providing three-way benefits: to students in the form of industry experience; to employers in the form of access to the latest teachings; and back to the University in the form of academic learning that is contextualised by industry practice.

- *how the university has responded to the French Review recommendations to adopt the Model Code on free speech and academic freedom.*

Following the release of the Model Code, the Vice-Chancellor established the Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Working Group, chaired by the President of Academic Senate and including representation from across the University. This group undertook an initial assessment of the provisions of the Model Code (including the proposed amendments from The Hon Robert French AC, The Hon Gareth Evans AC QC, and Peter Varghese AO) against the University's Rules, policies, codes and industrial instruments.

That assessment recommended that the University support the principles of the model code with some contextualised modification and to changes some existing policies. The University's Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom was approved by the University Council in August 2020 and implemented in September 2020. The December 2020 Walker Review assessed the University as 'fully aligned' with the Model Code.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- *its objectives and/or priorities for teaching and learning*

The University has embarked on an ambitious framework of transformational change with the launch of *Looking Ahead 2020-2025*; we will produce life-ready graduates who are work ready, health and well, and community minded.

- *its strategies to ensure quality in teaching and learning*

  - **Celebrating excellence**: The Student Success Strategy relies on our educators having the capability, capacity and enthusiasm to deliver teaching and learning that inspires excellence and creates excitement among students and education partners at all of our campuses and locations. Enabling our educators places the continued professional development of staff at the heart of the education transformation agenda. Strategic groupings such as the Educator Network (tEN) are a key part of our program of education excellence. The University has recently partnered with the UK-based Advance HE to deliver a fellowship program to support enhanced capability and academic networks.

  - **Healthy and Well:** Our Student-Centred Well being Framework supports wellbeing throughout the student journey and includes a comprehensive care infrastructure that supports social, mental and physical wellbeing. The University has also listed performance using the K10 index with psychological welfare as a Key Performance Indicator.

  - **Graduate Attributes:** To prepare our students for the future we are developing a refreshed set of skills and attributes that will guide their development – to mark them as distinct, globally aware, ready for the world of work and committed to lifelong learning.

  - **Work Integrated Learning**:. Our comprehensive 'Life Ready Graduates' initiative, will ensure that every undergraduate student will graduate with a meaningful work-based experience as part of their degree.

  - **Education Innovation**: Enhancement of all our programs and courses draws on a multifaceted approach to teaching and learning delivery. Curriculum design enriches the student experience and recognises different ways of learning. A suite of short courses has been developed in response to government priorities that align with local labor market gaps and articulate with existing bachelor and masters degree offerings.

  - **Equity**: We have a strong and vibrant pathway program that is one of the largest in the country, and a suite of outreach initiatives to reach students and community members in our regions experiencing disadvantage or barriers to education. In developing the appropriate learning support, we bring the student to the centre of the design process by using principles that focus on connecting students to the University, each other and their learning.

  - **Education Spaces**: We will transform our digital and physical environments into spaces, places and platforms that inspire and attract and move to a green campus providing exemplar leadership in sustainable resource management.

UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS TRANSPARENCY

- *how the University selects students for offers without an ATAR score, as part of its admissions process*

  - The University's 'Getting In' website explains the options for university admission for students without an ATAR. The website outlines a number of admission pathways and specific advice for a range of student cohorts. Students without an ATAR are admitted on the basis of a **selection rank** that is calculated on the basis of assessable qualifications. The use of a selection rank ensures that there is a transparent process to assess eligibility for admission.

  - In addition to our current pathways, the University is piloting a parallel admission scheme with **Big Picture Education Australia** and the Newcastle Waldorf School. Applicants through this pilot scheme present their high school portfolio to a university panel and undergo an interview for admission.

- *what evaluation strategies are in place for ensuring that students admitted without an ATAR are likely to succeed in their studies.*

  - The University has developed a comprehensive preparation and onboarding campaign from time-of-offer through to a student's first census date and beyond. This incorporates a process based on historical attrition/fail data to assign a **'risk value'** to all commencing students, regardless of entry pathway. Students are tracked and students deemed to be at risk of failure receive support at key points in the commencing student lifecycle.
  - The University also monitors students and cohort academic performance closely through its Tracking Student Engagement project (see below) within the education quality unit. This unit enables targeted support to be provided through the Learning Support Unit, when necessary.
  - There are two main central campaigns that operate through each semester and trimester: these are Orientation to Census Date (**OCD**) and Census Date to Exams (**CDX**). A comprehensive set of multi-channel communications and support strategies sit behind these two campaigns, including peer assisted study schemes and counselling.

UNIVERSITY RETENTION STRATEGIES

- *strategies to reduce the proportion of students that do not complete their course (including for students from regional and remote areas)*

  - In 2020 the University has placed considerable emphasis on student retention. This has included telephone catchups with all students, multiple times to 1st year students and those identified with challenges, monitoring usage of learning management tools and student surveys.

  These have built upon the continuation and expansion of initiatives such as:

- **Student Success Strategy (2019-2022)**. The Student Success Strategy provides a four-year vision for a whole-of-institution, integrated and collaborative approach to improving student retention and success. It articulates a commitment to a student-centred approach to learning, teaching and the student experience. The Strategy has four goals – connect, belong, empower and prepare – which contribute to our overarching goal to improve the student experience. Strategies to support student success begin at the pre-enrolment stage, and continue throughout the student journey
- **Commencing Student Calls Project**: A transition and preparation activity aimed at providing in-time information to address any student concerns experienced in the lead up to and through the first weeks of study. Calls focus on ensuring students are: enrolled correctly, accessing online systems and course materials, planning for assessments and aware of support.
- **Academic Success - Skills for Learning and Life**: Interactive online courses guide new students to set realistic expectations about studying at university and begin to develop the academic skills that are required to be successful at study. Coordination of Academic Success: Skills for Learning and Life includes: the setup of new students within the course, marketing of the course information/benefits and continued correspondence with students via email and the discussion board. All commencing students are given access to this course, which is voluntary for students to complete
- **Tracking Student Engagement Project**: developed to improve student success by leveraging course learning analytic data to proactively interact with students potentially at risk academically.
- **School Improvement Plans**: addressing factors to improve program and course quality. Emphasis is placed on program and course viability factors such as enrolment trends, student success and retention, student and graduate feedback, and graduate outcomes and factors that affect these, including learning and teaching quality, curriculum and assessment design, resourcing, among others.

- **Pre-Exams Call Project**: aims to assist commencing students in preparing for their final major assessments and/or formal exams. Provides a follow up intervention for students who do not engage with assessment/exam preparation information sent by email and SMS in the week prior to the calls.
- **Peer Assisted Study Sessions PASS**: provides a structured platform for students to discuss difficult concepts and review weekly material with colleagues. Sessions are led by a trained PASS leader.
- **Learning Support**: is provided through face-to-face engagement as well as online so that students studying in all modes have a range of options.

The University has also introduced a number of initiatives and strategies which are designed to build the capability of our educators to improve learning outcomes and enable student success. These strategies include:

- **The Educator Network (tEN)**: established in 2018 to promote teaching excellence and drive innovation through sharing good practice and collaboration; empower educators to teach better through sharing good practice and collaboration; provide practical solutions, support and resources, and enable capability in the scholarship of teaching and learning. In 2020, tEN established a partnership with Advance HE to deliver a fellowship program to support enhanced capability and academic networks.
- **Online Cultural Competency Program**: launched in May 2019, the program reinforces the University's core values of inclusiveness and tolerance, regardless of cultural or linguistic background. Available to all staff and Students. Recently launched the SBS Cultural Inclusion Program which focuses on increasing awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture.
- **The Student Retention and Success online resource**: is a 'one stop shop' for staff which provides information on current initiatives, best practice research, performance data and news on retention and success.

- *evaluation of these strategies, including follow-up with students who do not continue with their studies to better understand the reasons for this decision.*

The Student Success Strategy includes an evaluation framework to identify opportunities to scale-up and collaborate on effective initiatives.

- **Dropped Load Questionnaire**: All students who drop any load are automatically surveyed. There is a bank of questions and students are asked to tick the reasons that are relevant to them. Annual reports are prepared and some students are contacted for follow up, depending on their response.
- **Tracking Student Engagement project**: Works with Course Coordinators to contact students in courses that have historically high attrition rates. Support strategies are offered to students when they don't engage in the learning management system, have not submitted an assessment item or quiz or have been highlighted by the course coordinator as being absent. Students receive a range of advice or support, from informative emails to phone contact by Student Advisors for case management.
- **On-call analysis**: for example, comparison of UON's performance against a range of participation and retention measures for the sector presented by the Productivity Commission in June 2019.

RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING AND INNOVATION

- *strategies to ensure excellence in research and the strengthening of research capability*

Research Advantage has been established to foster the development of an engaged research community at the University of Newcastle, empowering academics at all levels to reach their full potential. This Program has a range of initiatives and strategies that support academics to build research capacity and excellence, and further support research development and success. The program supports researchers to:

- deliver competitive, high quality research
- collaborate with national and global partners
- develop as international research leaders

Specific examples from the 11 Initiatives that underpin Research Advantage include:

- The **NEWstar Program** (Program) an initiative involving research funding and leadership mentoring to accelerate the development of Mid–Career Researchers identified as having significant research potential and/or a strong research career trajectory and who aspire to undertake research leadership at the University.

- The **Women in Research Fellowship** (WIR Fellowship) provides research funding, peer mentoring, and leadership coaching for academic women at levels B and C, to invigorate their career, and facilitate their aspiration to senior leadership roles.

- The Women in STEMM ECR HDR Candidate Scholarships recognise the contribution early career researchers (ECRs) make to the University's research profile and productivity. Research Advantage has partnered with Graduate Research to support and develop ECR research and research leadership, through the provision of PhD candidate scholarships and associated bespoke mentoring and workshops.

A key strategy for raising the national and global profile of the University is investment of internal University resources to maximise research performance and facilitate excellence. The University provides a strategic investment portfolio with the broad goal of growing the research enterprise across our research students and academics. The 'strategic investment in research ' (STIR) portfolio gives transparency and stability to the research community at the University across big opportunities, seed grants for new research directions, workshops to encourage communities of practices around areas of research strength, equipment and infrastructure purchase and maintenance, travel and exhibition/publications support, and summer research internships, These open calls for proposals are awarded on a competitive basis, and in support of the Looking Ahead 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

- *strategies for the provision of high quality research training, including measures to encourage PhD industry placements. This information should identify the expected number of industry placements.*

The University encourages provision of high quality research training through an institution-wide research training program encompassing supervision and dedicated research training staff, student peer advisors, specialised library support and learning development. More details can be found: https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/graduate-research/current-students/progressing-students.

See also information on **Research Advantage** above.

Academics and higher degree research candidates are encouraged to engage with industry to develop their attributes and professional networks as they progress through their research program. Our University has re-envisaged its Industry Sponsored Scholarship (ISS) program for students to build collaborative relationships across sectors enabling our future leaders to transform innovative research into workplace practice, deepening the partnership between the University and the private sector. Growing the number of ISS placements remains a target activity.

The University has developed a HDR Work Integrated Learning program to build collaborative relationships across sectors enabling our future leaders to transform innovative research into workplace practice (see https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/graduate-research/industry-and-community). We estimate that approx. 20 HDR students are currently engaged in these initiatives, with the University planning to significantly expand industry placements across the HDR space . In 2021 we will launch the *Industry Engaged PhD Pathway* which will provide an opportunity for PhD students across all disciplines to access a dedicated support program for industry engagement as they progress through their degree, including an industry placement, specialised research training supports. Specific institution-wide programs include:

- Establishment of Doctoral Training Centres (DTC) to provide industry-embedded PhD programs and training to produce impactful research outcomes, job-ready graduates and strong links between industry and the University.

    o The Advanced METS DTC supports innovation, optimisation, efficiency, productivity and sustainability in the Mining Equipment, Technology and Services (METS) sector.

    o The Food and Agribusiness DTC finds solutions to the challenges and opportunities that will shape the food and agribusiness industry in the coming years including those associated with product science, climate resilience, advanced technology and market access.

- Targeted PhD scholarships to strengthen capacity building initiatives with our global partners, and benefit their regional communities.

    o 8 Pacific region scholarships awarded for projects tied to the environmental protection priorities of University partner SPREP (Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme) and other regional organisations. PhD candidates are involved in research areas including the effects of marine plastics, bioremediation of oil in WWII wrecks, ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change, coral reef adaptation to ocean acidification, and the impact of invasive species on ecosystem recovery.

- Industry-sponsored students through our collaborative industry centres, including the ARC Research Hub for Advanced Technologies for Australian Iron Ore and BHP Billiton Centre for Ironmaking and Materials Research.

- Industry placements: facilitated on a personalised basis through ARC Linkage projects and targeted industry scholarships.

- APR.Intern - provides a platform for industry to further develop and innovate through short-term 3-5 month tightly focused research projects and gives postgraduate students the opportunity to apply highly analytical research expertise to the project while gaining invaluable experience in an industry setting.

- *strategies to encourage research translation and commercialisation, including collaboration and engagement with industry and other end users, and the measures of success that the university monitors in this area*

The Knowledge Exchange & Enterprise (KEE) Unit is tasked with coordinating three functions. The first is assisting our industry partners to identify researchers with the expertise their businesses need to solve industry problems and where appropriate, to facilitate those businesses to co-apply with the University to secure grant funding to accelerate the research collaborations. Secondly, KEE also provides the intellectual property (IP) and commercial advice to the University in relation to the commercialisation of the University's existing IP portfolio. It does so principally through out-licensing on terms designed to maximise the impact of our research. KEE measures the level of investment industry makes in the collaborative research agreement it brokers.

Lastly KEE also oversees UON's Integrated Innovation Network (I2N). I2N currently delivers two core entrepreneurial skill development programs "*Navigator* and *Validator*". These programs encourage

and support would-be entrepreneurs, as well as early stage businesses, to critically evaluate innovation opportunities to maximise their chances of commercial success. Since its establishment in 2016 I2N has supported, 71 companies who have raised >$6M. 14 businesses remain in and employ from the region.

The Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER) has a unique engagement model that connects academia and industry through a common platform for research to support sectors of global significance – energy, resources, food and water. The model facilitates collective capacity and joint branding of industry partners and research groups, enabling them to engage in significant national and international research collaborations.

- The Innovation Launchpad, an initiative facilitated through the NIER-hosted NSW Energy & Resources Knowledge Hub, which provides an opportunity for scale-up SMEs to work with world-class researchers at NIER to test, pilot and demonstrate new technology.

- Research programs developed through platforms including the Pacific Node, and Research Roadmaps, which identify and define capabilities and essential actions necessary to position the University as a major enabler of innovation by delivering scientific and technological advances to benefit key industry sectors.

- *strategies to promote open access to research publications and data.*

The University recognises the potential benefits that publicly funded research can bring to researchers and the broader community. An Open Access Guideline is in place which promotes the dissemination of research findings in an international open-access environment. As part of this commitment a partnership between Research & Innovation Services, Information Technology Services and the UON Library has been established in support of research data sharing, The University has a Research Data and Materials Management Guideline in place. The University Library provides infrastructure, support and advice to promote data management planning and good practice so as to enable the dissemination and sharing of research data to the national Research Data Australia service. The University Library is also an active contributing member of the Australasian Open Access Scholarship Group and the Council of Australian University Libraries, strongly advocating for open access and guiding sector-wide change to ensure universities are appropriately set-up for the future direction of open scholarship.

EQUITY

- *strategies for improving Indigenous outcomes and related targets*

The University of Newcastle is committed to a whole-of-University approach to Indigenous Higher Education and this is supported by a suite of strategic documents that embed commitments to Indigenous Higher Education. As part of our enduring commitment to equity and social justice, a measure of success is student retention, and success for Indigenous students, a rate of 3.9% Indigenous employment, an increase in Indigenous led research and increasing the cultural knowledge and understanding of all staff. The Indigenous Education and Research Portfolio which includes The Wollotuka Institute, has a key leadership role to play in achieving these targets, as well as ensuring that commensurate participation occurs in a culturally safe environment of excellence in the fields of education and research. The University has developed a Cultural Capability Framework which will guide staff to be more culturally responsive across the organisation.

The University has also appointed a Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Strategy and Leadership, who has responsibility for leading the University's Indigenous Education Framework and drive excellence in Indigenous education and research. This senior role, which sits on the University's Executive, is also responsible for innovation into Indigenous education and research and will be responsible for leading the implementation of our soon-to-be-released Indigenous Education and Research Framework.

Student Engagement and Success strategies

- Schools 2 University (S2U) programs – iBelieve, Insights Days, UAC talks
- Indigenous Tutorial Program – academic tutoring
- Alternate Entry Schemes – Mirroma Bunbilla, Newcastle Law School Early Entry Scheme and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alternate Admissions Scheme.
- Yapug (Enabling) program
- Cultural activities, Men's and Women's groups
- Social activities such as National Indigenous Games, luncheons, social sports etc
- Employment pathways - Career Trackers internship partnership

Indigenous Employment

The University's Maligagu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy is a standalone document, which was launched in November 2019. The University has set a target of 3.9% of providing employment participation 'parity' which reflects the Indigenous population percentage rates for the University's footprint area of Newcastle City / Lake Macquarie, the Broader Hunter Region (excluding Newcastle City), the Central Coast, and the Mid-North Coast.

Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research (BATSIER)

BATSIER's role is to support the Vice-Chancellor and senior management on matters relating to the development and implementation of policy concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Research, and to ensure that these meet the needs identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

UON Cultural Capability Framework

The Student Success strategy aims to improve the student experience by ensuring students from all backgrounds have a strong sense of engagement and belonging, at all stages of their student journey. In 2020 the University developed a Cultural Capability Framework which aims to build capability around inclusion and cultural diversity and expand the Indigenisation and internationalisation of the curriculum, to proactively support our culturally diverse population.

Website link for further information: https://www.newcastle.edu.au/about-uon/our-university/indigenous-collaboration/the-wollotuka-institute

- *strategies for achieving equity for regional and remote students, for low socio economic students and students from other equity groups*

The University of Newcastle has a high proportion of students from identified equity groups in comparison to other institutions in the sector. Over time we have developed a strong pathways program to support increased access and participation rates for students from diverse backgrounds, as well as strategies to support success. Key performance indicators for access and success for identified cohorts are applied across the institution and at unit level.

- **Pathways:** The University has the largest Commonwealth funded enabling program in the country and continues to innovate in terms of course structure and delivery to maximize positive student outcomes for diverse cohorts.
- **Student Success Strategy** (refer above to Retention Strategies) and related Implementation Team.

Two key reports support the development and enhancement of strategies to achieve parity of outcomes for students from equity groups. Responses to these reports are supported by cross-institutional teams.

- **The Annual Equity Report:** A comprehensive annual report that considers key indicators for target equity groups to inform strategies that will support student success. The Report links to the Student Equity and Social Justice Strategic Framework and is considered by the Student Equity and Social Justice Expert Panel.
- **Learning Impacts Report:** A survey of all students on the issues that they feel may impact on their enrolment and study at the University. Survey outcomes are considered by the Learning Impacts Working Group, which designs and oversees implementation of targeted strategies to ensure that the University is responding appropriately and flexibly to student needs.

- *strategies for reducing unemployment in the regions serviced by institutions, including youth unemployment rates*

The University serves regions characterised by unemployment rates higher than those found in capital cities, particularly in youth unemployment. The broader Hunter economy is undergoing structural changes as new technologies and labour markets emerge, while having educational attainment rates lower than remote Australia in some cases. The University is playing a central role in this social and economic transformation through access to developing knowledge in education, professional practice and research, and the development of a strong knowledge-based economy. The University's two key strategies in this respect incorporate aspiration raising activities in targeted communities, and program development in areas of identified skill shortages.

- **Outreach:** Through the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, the University runs a program of evidence-based outreach activities for children of all ages, as well as at-risk groups such as young people with an out of home care experience.
- **Program development:** The Bachelor of Public and Community Health at the University's Central Coast Campus has been developed in recognition of the demographic and labour market needs of the region and in collaboration with community, health and government stakeholders. This program is the first in the world to embrace 'Big Picture' learning design.

The University also has strong partnerships and articulation arrangements with TAFE NSW to provide an integrated suite of pathways for learners. Innovative dual qualification programs such as the Bachelor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering allow students to graduate with a Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician through TAFE NSW alongside their degree.

- *strategies for increasing student support for relocating students (potentially including specialised on-boarding programs)*

- The **Student Success Strategy** recognizes the importance of "belonging" in supporting improved retention and success for all students. The Success Strategy aims to nurture supportive peer relations and foster meaningful interaction between staff and students; develop students' knowledge, confidence and identity as successful learners; and provide an experience that is relevant to students' interests and future goals. To facilitate this, the University has a comprehensive preparation and onboarding campaign from time-of-offer through to a student's first census date and beyond.
- In addition to strategies referred to throughout, the University has a program of extra-curricular support and a comprehensive **Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy** and Action Plan to ensure that students have access to effective help and services, in addition to a well-supported program of clubs and societies.

- *strategies to increase community access to university facilities*

The University has a range of longstanding public and community access strategies as well as a program of new and innovative engagement activities. In addition, our city campus is designed as a porous space, open to community and business use.

- **University libraries**: The University Library supports the Hunter Living Histories program, community membership, and community activities such as the annual book fair.

- **Open Days**: The University has implemented a strong community engagement focus in annual Open Days to bring community members of all ages on site to share in opportunities for learning.
- **City Spaces:** The University is actively investing in new and improved facilities that encourage increased community access.
- **Public Lecture series:** Our Public Lecture Program forms part of the University's efforts to contribute knowledge, thought-leadership and innovative ideas to the region.
- **Massive Online Open Courses:** Open Courses including MOOCs bring a taste of high quality tertiary education to the world at little or no cost to the consumer. The University offers a range of award winning online open courses and has engaged with around 200,000 students in partnership with online providers since these courses were introduced in 2017.
- **I2N Integrated Innovation Network** and related grand challenges (see Research above)

- *strategies to increase aspirations and advice to school students on study options.*

Outreach

- **Schools Outreach Presentations:** Presentations incorporate information about transitioning to University, explaining the differences between school and university and highlighting the support services that are available to students when they are at University.
- **School Visit/Open Days:** On campus events including Open Day, School Visits Day but also other, smaller events provide prospective students with the opportunity to experience what university is like to inform their decision making and best prepare them for the transition to university.
- **Start Smart:** This event invites non-school leaver prospective and offered students an opportunity to come onto campus late in the year prior to commencement (usually December) to experience a mini expo, campus tour and presentations. Aimed at providing this cohort answers to questions early and to engage them after they have received early offers.

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

In this section the University should refer to information on:

- *strategies for identifying skills gaps within the relevant student and business catchments*

- **Graduate Attributes** have a focus on preparing students to be life-ready as well as job-ready, with an understanding of the rapid transformations occurring in the labour market nationally and internationally. The attributes aim to enhance the development of transferable skills and prepare students to manage and engage with opportunities arising from digital disruption and the future of work.
- **Employer Front Door**, which offers students, alumni mentors, and industry partners a physical 'employability' space on campus to identify and exploit emerging opportunities for the benefit of all stakeholders.

- *strategies for meeting labour market priorities at a local, regional and/or national level*

- **The Portfolio Strategy Group**: is a senior multi-disciplinary leadership group that considers national and sectoral priorities including skills shortages and labour market trends in the development of the University's portfolio of programs.
- **A viability analysis** accompanies all program review and development to ensure that a range of factors, including labour market priorities, are considered by decision makers.
- **External Reviews** are conducted on a cyclical basis for existing programs by a panel of experts which includes students, staff, and community and industry stakeholders to ensure that the portfolio of programs is current, relevant, and of high quality.

- **Advisory Boards** for Faculties, Schools and individual programs draw expertise from industry and business into curriculum design, review and alignment with contemporary employer and labor market priorities.

- *strategies to address employability and graduate attribute skills gaps to ensure students are work-ready*

  - **Work Integrated Learning** opportunities ensure that all undergraduates will have at least one WIL experience during their time at the University as part of the University's Life Ready Graduates initiative. The University's term calendar has been adjusted in 2020 to facilitate formal WIL experiences.
  - **Jobs On Campus** offers students opportunities to develop employability skills in a professional workplace. The program recruits for a range of roles including the Enquiry Centre, Library, Student Ambassadors, and the PASS program.
  - **Digital badging and recognition** provides a record of skills and attributes reflecting Work Integrated Learning experiences and activities that are supplementary to academic curricula.
  - **Careers Service website** which offers career information and CareerHub and a range of career information resources. The service also offers a daily drop in service with triaged access to longer appointments with CICA qualified Careers Consultants.
  - Location specific industry initiatives such as Connect_ED , which brings students working together in diverse teams on real industry projects during semester break.

- *the application of these strategies to admissions and enrolments*

The University has a structured approach to recognizing prior learning and professional experience, and granting credit.

  - **Credit and Articulation**: The University has had formal articulation relationships with TAFE/VET for over twenty years and currently has more than 200 articulation arrangements with over 20 VET providers. Applicants who have completed an AQF accredited Certificate IV, Diploma or Advanced Diploma qualification are guaranteed an offer to commence one of 45 (as of 2019) undergraduate degrees across all 5 Faculties and a range of disciplines. Applicants who enter via this pathway may also be eligible for academic credit towards their degree, if they have completed a Diploma (or higher). New arrangements have been agreed in 2019 for veterans to recognize professional training with credit in a range of programs.

- *how labour market strategies are taken into account in developing course offerings.*

In developing course and program offerings the University has formal processes to ensure that labour market strategies are considered.

  - The University works closely with local industry groups, in particular, the Newcastle Chamber of Commerce, the local chapter of the Australian Industry Group and HunterNet, a employer / employee support scheme. It also regularly receives reports from the Hunter Research Foundation on employment trends across the Hunter and Central Coast.
  - **A viability analysis** accompanies all program review and development to ensure that a range of factors, including labour market priorities, are considered as part of a business case by decision makers.
  - **External Reviews** are conducted on a cyclical basis for existing programs by a panel of experts which includes students, staff, and community and industry stakeholders to ensure that the portfolio of programs is current, relevant, and of high quality.

SECURITY MEASURES

- *actions being taken to ensure the safety of data against cyber attack*

A key initiative in 2020 was the completion of the migration of on-premise applications to the Cloud (AWS Sydney region) which has provided additional security through network segmentation and a range of native and embedded security services. In addition, the following specific cyber security initiatives have been undertaken over the last year:

- Roll-out of the **Information Security Awareness Training module**, which all staff have had to complete and will need to refresh annually;
- Activation of **Multi-Factor Authentication** (MFA) for all staff, protecting access to University systems off-campus and/or remotely;
- Implementation of the Mimecast **Email Security** solution for staff and students, which provides defence-in-depth security against email-borne threats and business email compromise (BEC); and
- Implementation of **near-real-time security monitoring of** the University's use of **cloud services.**

Other security-related initiatives currently underway include:

- **Privileged Access Management** to control administrative privileges to operating systems and applications based on user duties;
- Continuation of the **Awareness Campaign** to build information security awareness by staff and students;
- Improvements to **Microsoft 365 security** including updates to email security and strengthening controls around SharePoint, OneDrive and MS Teams to secure restricted and highly-restricted data;
- **Application Control** (whitelisting) involving the identification and control of authorized applications that can be installed and executed on University machines;
- **Encryption** of data held on **end user devices** (PCs, laptops) held by staff;
- **Data protection** to mitigate risk in the event of a data breach, initially via static data masking on non-production environments for enterprise applications, then data management to mitigate risks in production environments and ensure compliance with legislation in terms of retention and disposal of enterprise data;
- Multi-year project to upgrade the University's **digital identity management** capabilities, which will see access to the University's IT systems used by various groups including students, staff, prospective students, collaborators and alumni manage becoming centrally managed by a world-leading identity-as-a-service (IDaaS) solution.

- *mitigation strategies in the case of a breach of security*

In summary, UON's mitigation strategies are spread across People, Process and Technology domains, and include:

- a continually updated set of Policies, Procedures, Playbooks, and Guidelines,
- Technology to support the detection, and response to any breaches, and
- Appropriately delegated and skilled personnel to respond to such events.

In addition, the University purchases appropriate Cyber Security Insurance to provide a response control where other corrective controls do not completely treat the consequences of a breach.

Details of UON's mitigation strategies available in the case of a breach of the confidentiality, integrity or availability of University information or systems are given below.

- Information Security Incident Management Guidelines, which form part of the University's overall incident management procedures:
  - IT Incident Management Process;
  - Information Security Incident Management Guidelines;
  - Information Technology Services' Critical Incident Management Guide; and
  - University's Business Continuity Management Policy and Business Continuity Management Framework.
- Documented procedures and playbooks, e.g. Compromised Credential Procedure
- Continuous vulnerability and compliance scanning to detect improper configuration changes, for action by operational teams.
- Internal staff, managed service providers and partners with training and expertise in such response

- Cyber Liability Insurance
- SIEM platform to enable investigative response
- System backups
- Restoration points\snapshots

- *how the University complies with the Australian Cyber Security Centre's "Strategies to mitigate cyber security incidents" document (https://www.cyber.gov.au/publications/strategies-to-mitigate-cyber-security-incidents-mitigation-details)*

Addressing the "Essential Eight" mitigation strategies identified by the Australian Cyber Security Centre for improvement of cyber resilience is a critical component of UON's Information Security framework. In addition to the technical strategies below, an ongoing training and awareness program for staff and students also exists, which is centred on the ACSC Essential Eight strategies to create a cyber-security-conscious culture across the University.

Strategies to prevent malware delivery and execution

- Application Whitelisting
- Application patching
- Configuration of Microsoft Office macro settings
- User application hardening

Strategies to limit the extent of cyber security incidents

- Restricting administration privileges
- Multi-factor authentication
- Operating System patching

Strategies to recover data and system availability

- Daily back-ups

- *measures in place to enhance the identification and deterrence of foreign interference activities including actions to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.*

The Commonwealth Minister for Education announced the establishment of the University Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT) in August 2019 of which the Vice-Chancellor is a member. Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector were subsequently released. All universities are now working on a range of issues in relation to foreign interference including risk identification, managing conflicts of interest, managing contracts and cyber security. In addition to the cyber security measures listed about, the University has also established the following governance and risk frameworks, education, disclosures, and mitigation strategies to increase the resilience of our institution to foreign interference activities:

- **Governance and risk frameworks**: Oversight and co-ordination of the foreign interference activities is via the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation, who chairs a working group supported by Academic Division, Resources Division, Global Engagement and Partnerships, General Counsel, and Finance Division of the University of Newcastle. The Research Integrity and Compliance Committee supports this work for research academics and students and considers high-risk or sensitive research-related activities proposed or in progress with foreign interference and national security implications (reporting and mitigation mechanisms). The University's Security Officer and Assistant Security Officer maintain the University's security management plan that provides University staff guidance regarding their individual security responsibilities across personnel security, physical security, information/cyber security, and governance security.
- **Due Diligence**: The University of Newcastle ensures compliance with all federal laws and Acts, including the Foreign Influence and Transparency Scheme Act, Defence Trade Controls Act, Autonomous Sanctions Act, and that National Security Legislation Amendment. Declarations

of interest processes have been strengthened to include annual online disclosures of domestic and foreign arrangements for all professional and academic staff. The University's Defence Strategy provides a mechanism to identify research academics undertaking research in the national interest and works with the Australian Government Department of Defence to ensure the University is a trusted partner in this space. This includes Defence Industry Security Program accreditation for the institution (application under consideration), and a security register to capture all matters of security interest relevant to Defence Programs at the University of Newcastle. Basic due diligence checks are conducted by the University's Research and Innovations Services for all grant applications of a high-risk nature, and by the Global Engagement and Partnership Division for collaboration agreements, incoming visits, etc.

- **Communication and Education**: Annual research integrity training is a requirement of all research academics, students, and professional staff engaged in research activities to ensure understanding of and compliance with codes of conduct, federal laws, the Defence Security Principles Framework, and relevant legislation. Annual security awareness training, delivered through the University's Research Advantage program, provides all staff with education about relevant internal and foreign threats to the University, protective security principles, advice for mitigating information, physical, and personnel security threats, and encourages a culture of security, reporting, and risk mitigation. An Insider Threat Awareness program provides guidance on how staff and students can report concerns or suspicious activity via the University's Security Officer.

- **Knowledge Sharing**: The University of Newcastle has developed and maintains strong, collaborative partnerships across the University Sector, with Government (state and federal, and key business and international partners to share and align processes in support of countering foreign interference.

SIGNED for and on behalf of

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by Danielle Donegan, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Higher Education Division of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment as delegate of the Minister for Education.

Signed by
Danielle Donegan
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Date: 17 December 2020
_____

In the presence of:
Signed by
Sabrina Kim
_____

Position of witness
Policy Officer
_____

SIGNED for and on behalf of
University of Newcastle

Signed by
Professor Alex Zelinsky
_____

Position
Vice-Chancellor and President
_____

In the presence of:
Signed by
Jenny Brockelsby
_____

Position or profession of witness
Personal Assistant
_____