Australian Government

Department of Education, Skills and Employment

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

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

The University of Southern Queensland vision is to be renowned for innovation and excellence in education, student experience, research and engagement (USQ Strategic Plan 2021-2025). Our mission is to build on our strengths as Australia's leading regional university, and realise our vision by creating and sharing knowledge, transforming lives and solving the problems that matter to our world.

Three key outcomes we will achieve over the compact period are:

• Growing our student population and broadening participation in higher education by enhancing first year experiences through curricular and co-curricular initiatives that assist transition to learning at university, increasing work-integrated learning and employability in subjects and increasing student engagement.

• Delivering an outstanding student experience and outcomes by supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success, supporting target demographic groups of USQ (e.g. first in family and low SES) and increasing participation and outcomes for regional and remote students.

• Growing the quality and quantity of research outcomes through broadening our research base and increasing capacity for quality HDR supervision, building research scale and focus in the University's flagship areas and engaging strongly with industry to deliver impact to our communities.

Performance will be measured across a range of indicators that provide opportunities to evaluate success in the short and long term. Critical quantitative measures include: student population growth and participation; student experience and employment outcomes (QILT surveys); student progression, retention and completion rates; ERA quality standards; research income and outputs; international rankings; and a range of diversity and sustainability metrics.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The University of Southern Queensland is fully aligned with the Model Code. The University's Academic Board led the development of the [Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy](#), approved by the University Council in December 2020. The alignment of University policies to the Model Code on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom was informed by a comprehensive policy analysis and literature review. Both Academic Board and Council are strongly committed and aligned to the French Model Code and will work with the Vice-Chancellor's Executive and University management in the implementation of the new policy and associated alignment of other existing policies and procedures. Existing policies requiring extensive revision are the University's Code of Conduct Policy and Media Engagement Policy and Media Engagement Procedure. Minor changes are required for 19 other policies and procedures, and these revisions will be completed in 2021.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

The University's three key targets for enhancing teaching and learning outcomes for Australian students are:

- Improved first year student experience and retention:
  - o Achieved by: clearer pathways and improved credit options for commencing students; first year curriculum reform in all undergraduate courses and proactive student success advising.
  - o Measured by: results in internal learning and teaching and QILT surveys; and improvement in student progression, retention and completion rates.

- Improved graduate employability:
  - o Achieved by: increasing the focus on employability through enhanced industry engagement; a greater focus on employability and work-integrated learning; partnering with industry in micro-credential offerings; extending the system of RPL.
  - o Measured by: increased WIL in subjects; quantity of RPL; and improved student employability learning outcomes via the USQ employability cluster of questions in the QILT Student Experience Survey.

- Improved student engagement, progression and success:
  - o Achieved by: implementation of a [Students as Partners Strategy](#) which builds a philosophy and culture based on engaging students as partners; [creating safer communities](#); enhancing [USQ frontline services](#); and proactive, data-driven, personalised [student advising](#).
  - o Measured by: increase in progression rates and subject completions; and decrease in course-level attrition.

Because the vast majority of the University's degree programs were already available online, the University rapidly transitioned all students to wholly online learning, teaching and support necessitated by the CVOID-19 pandemic, enacting a [range of adjustments](#). The guidance note for the University's [Learning and Teaching Approach for 2021](#) provides details of the measures put in place to support on-campus and online learning.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

The University of Southern Queensland's three key priorities for research, research training, innovation and industry engagement are:

- Broadening our research base and increasing capacity for quality HDR supervision:

  o Achieved by: researcher development and capacity building programs; and strengthening annual performance reviews and recruitment processes to ensure an equal focus on research and teaching.

  o Measured by: proportion of research active academics; and quality research outputs per academic.

- Building research scale and focus in flagship areas including space and defence, agriculture, health and regional development:

  o Achieved by: targeted investment in researchers and facilities ensuring national leadership in our flagships and other emerging areas (e.g. Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Business and Education).

  o Measured by: growth in research income; quality of research outputs; and increased HDR enrolments.

- Engaging strongly with industry to deliver impact to our communities:

  o Achieved by: development of and engagement in large-scale partnerships, such as the USQ-led Future Drought Fund Resilience Hub; and focus on increasing placement of HDR students into industry.

  o Measured by: overall growth in long term (>3 year) partnerships; number of HDR industry placements; research impact in our communities; and commercialisation outcomes (e.g. number of licenses and new patents).

The University has reviewed its approach to managing national security risks to embed the University Foreign Interference Taskforce guidelines and Defence security measures to ensure that it provides a framework that supports excellence while ensuring national security. USQ has a mature Cyber Security Strategy that is based on the National Institute of Standards and Technology Cyber Security Framework.

IMPROVING STUDENT EQUALITY AND OUTCOMES

The University of Southern Queensland's three key priorities for improving student equity and outcomes are:

• Supporting First Nations student success:

- o Achieved by: Deadly Ways (which provides regional First Nations high school students in years 7-12 with a real-life university experience); study support and guidance; and implementation of the First Nations Education, Research and Workforce Strategies, and USQ Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

- o Measured by: increased representation and participation, improved student experience, retention, progression and completion rates of First Nations students.

• Supporting target demographic groups of USQ, such as first in family and low SES:

- o Achieved by: block delivery of the USQ Enabling course to provide additional entry points; expanded annual calendar of on-campus diversity and inclusion events and a range of health and wellbeing and student life activities (such as bulk billed medical services, counselling, resilience programs, welfare, multi-cultural services); and expanded activities with NESB and refugee communities.

- o Measured by: increased representation and participation; improved student experience; and retention, progression, and completion rates of key demographic groups.

• Increasing participation and outcomes of regional and remote students:

- o Achieved by: Future Students Strategy (student and community outreach – focused on communities with low participation in higher education); increased collaboration with Regional University Centres; and continued provision of high-quality online study options and student support services (such as orientation, transition and success advising).

- o Measured by: increased representation and participation, improved student experience, retention, progression, and completion rates of regional and remote students.

SIGNED for and on behalf of

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by

Dom English
_____

Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary
_____

Position

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

_____

Signature

28/12/2021
_____

Date

In the presence of:

Ryan Kinder
_____

Witness (please print)

A/g Director
_____

Position or profession of witness (please print)

_____

Signature

SIGNED for and on behalf of

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

by

Professor Geraldine Mackenzie
_____

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor
_____

Position

_____

Signature

In the presence of:

Toni Bryon
_____

Witness (please print)

Executive Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor
_____

Position or profession of witness (please print)

_____

Signature