



2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Charles Darwin University

Purpose

This compact is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the University. Entering into a Compact is one of the quality and accountability requirements, which a higher education provider must meet under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) as a condition of receiving a grant. Specifically, subsection 19-110(1) of HESA requires that Table A and Table B providers must, in respect of each year for which a grant is paid to the provider under HESA, enter into a Mission-Based Compact with the Commonwealth for a period that includes that year.

All strategies should provide qualitative and/or quantitative measures of assessment.

Mission and Strategic Planning

Charles Darwin University's (CDU) vision is to be Australia's most connected university by being courageous and making a difference in the Northern Territory (NT), Australia and beyond.

Being a dual sector university, including vocational education and training, CDU supports the training, degree education and research needs of the Northern Territory and its people. We deliver through campuses in Darwin, Alice Springs, Palmerston and Katherine and in study centres in Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek. CDU has a proud history of delivering on country in some of the NT's most remote locations. The NT spans approximately one sixth of Australia's landmass and yet is home to just one per cent of the population, of whom 30 per cent are First Nations peoples.

In addition, CDU delivers remotely to students across the country, and through a growing Sydney campus in Haymarket, Sydney CBD.

Charles Darwin University's [Strategic Plan 2021 – 2026](#) outlines seven goals to achieve our vision. Ten Strategic KPIs provide a measurable way to track progress against the Strategic Plan, and are reported annually in our Annual Report.

Responding to workforce and skills needs is undertaken at a Faculty level and with constant engagement with Industry. In addition, CDU reports to the NT Government about how its delivery aligns with areas of high priority skills needs.

CDU's [Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech policy](#) has been implemented and is fully conforms to the Walker recommendations.

CDU conforms to the *Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector* and actively identifies risk and manages threats. Where appropriate, reporting is undertaken to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Cyber and data security remain significant risks at CDU and are governed by the [Information Security and Access Policy](#).

CDU developed an action plan in response to the 2022 Student Safety Survey which includes actions to equip both staff and students. Under the action plan, CDU has committed to reporting publicly on the CDU website Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment incidents on an annual basis. In 2024 we will host a National Respect Week, 18 – 22 March 2024. Activities across our campuses to raise awareness and promote respect are targeted at Week 3, Semester One for maximum student engagement.

Once finalised, CDU commits to the implementation of actions arising from the Draft Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

CDU has high levels of participation of regional, low SES, and First Nations students. The University's key priorities to support students from under-represented backgrounds will be:

1. To increase engagement with First Nations peoples, businesses, represented bodies, and more in our commitment to First Nations Education, including embedding First Nations knowledge and content into our curriculum.
2. To provide specialist academic assistance and support for students from under-represented backgrounds.
3. To widen participation of students from under-represented backgrounds.

We will measure our success through a variety of qualitative and quantitative metrics such as:

- The [First Nations Leadership Core Plan](#) that describes a program of work that will:
 - Support a diverse range of First Nations students to succeed
 - Maintain culturally safe places on campus
 - Increase First Nations employment
 - Support the CDU approach to reconciliation with First Nations people

Initiatives include:

- Developing and implementing the whole of university approach to improving the Unit Success Rate for First Nations Higher Education Students.
- Delivering sessions on embedding First Nations Perspectives at CDU – Our Approach during Learning and Teaching Week.
- Providing [First Nations Pathways to University pre-programs](#) in Law, Accounting, Business, Health, Education, Arts & Humanities and STEM.
- The CDU Student Transition and Retention Success (STARS) Plan which defines a series of strategic initiatives designed to lift CDU's Higher Education (HE) retention and success rates.
- The CDU Performance Hub dashboard that monitors success rate variations and trends, and targets form part of individual and team plans.

CDU has improved its Orientation program and provided study skills as additional support to students:

- Transition to CDU - a 5-week program for new students to ensure they are able to access the right information/support at the right time, and have multiple opportunities to connect with other students and key staff across the 5-week program.
- [Language and Learning Support](#) provides services to assist students with skills development tailored to their specific units.

In addition, the University is committed to building a safe and inclusive university providing key services to support under-represented groups [Life, health and wellbeing | Charles Darwin University \(cdu.edu.au\)](#), and is further highlighted in the following plans:

The [Mental Health Strategy 2022 – 2026](#), ‘Thriving Together at CDU’, focuses on the mental wellbeing of the CDU Student Community. The Mental Health Strategy involves a holistic approach, promoting mental health awareness, resilience, and student support. It also acknowledges that CDU staff play a pivotal role in nurturing students' mental well-being and can serve as a valuable resource in facilitating this.

The [Accessibility Action Plan 2023- 2026](#) aims to transform Charles Darwin University's (CDU) culture by implementing actions and strategies to remove barriers to access and promote inclusive practices for students with disability. Aligned with CDU's commitment to creating an equitable and inclusive environment, the Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) outlines strategies and actions under the following focus areas: policy and planning, learning and teaching environment, digital environment, built environment, student support/engagement and culture.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

Goal 1: CDU’s Student Transition and Retention Success (STARS) Plan continues to identify initiatives to lift CDU’s HE retention and success rates:

- Transition for early success
- Risk management for early interventions
- Teaching for retention
- Careers to link to future goals
- Customer Experience systems and processes

This will be measured through improved onboarding processes, high-priority courses identified and tracked to monitor attritions, student feedback platforms, the introduction of the early summative assessment in the [HE Assessment \(Coursework\) Policy and Procedure](#), and the [HE Academic Progression Policy](#) that outlines CDU’s committee to provide early intervention where academic progress is at risk.

Goal 2: CDU developed a whole of university approach to improving the Unit Success Rate for First Nations Higher Education Students. This Plan is separated into the following quadrants:

- Q1 - Unit Entry/Readiness
- Q2 - Early Engagement
- Q3 - Learning and Teaching
- Q4 - Unit Completion

The ‘student-journey’ framework will be incorporated across all quadrants to ensure actions are aligned to the student journey and current and/or emerging initiatives contribute to achieving the goals of the Plan.

Goal 3: Implement the HE and VET Teaching Capability Framework developed in 2023.

This framework builds professional and digital capabilities, enabling lecturers to design and deliver online and hybrid courses for diverse student cohorts. The framework will inform a broader academic expectations framework and specifically address digital capability. Adoption and widespread use of the framework for self-assessment and planning professional development will result in increased student satisfaction rates.

The first iteration of the CDU Quality Charter was developed in 2023 and through a co-design approach highlighted the following themes:

- has students at the heart
- is delivered in context
- is relevant and sustainable

Goal 4: Monitor and enhance the curriculum management system that manages the curriculum throughout the entire curriculum lifecycle. The digital platform provides a set of tools to collaboratively and efficiently co-design, monitor and review innovative and quality curriculum to support excellence in teaching and learning. This system will incorporate annual course monitoring, bi-annual rolling course and unit level enhancements, new course development and five yearly comprehensive reviews. Compliance across the product portfolio with CDU policies, procedures, and regulatory standards will result in revenue growth and improved stakeholder engagement.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

CDU is a research-intensive university that prioritises the complex issues facing northern Australia and the Asia-Pacific.

Research Impact & Excellence

We will deliver transformational impact through research excellence. We will continue to build upon our strengths in [environment](#), [policy](#) and [health](#) and build new strengths in [agriculture](#).

We will measure our quality and impact through annual growth in both new funding awarded and Q1 publications. We will continue our commitment to world-class research by improving our international rankings and increase the number of CDU academics in the Stanford University top 2% Scientists.

We will [provide training](#) to our research staff and students to facilitate research projects that create real-world, positive and lasting change. We will demonstrate our research impact by recording and sharing [impact case studies](#).

First Nations Research

Our research will prioritise the needs of First Nations people. CDU research significantly relates to Indigenous peoples, communities, culture and knowledges. We will continue to explore and articulate our research strength in For45 Indigenous Studies by participating in the [Australian Research Council's Indigenous Studies Pilot](#). This will provide insights to inform future CDU research strategy and national funding agendas.

We will transition the highly successful [Molly Wardaguga First Nations birthing on country Centre](#) into an Institute to continue to foster culturally responsive models of care and Indigenous health.

Research Training

We will foster an exceptional research training environment for HDR students. We will focus on implementing the recent improvements to our [HDR Policy](#), [HDR Supervision Procedure](#), and [Preparation, Submission and Examinations Procedure](#). We will improve current average PhD completion rates from 5 to 4 years. We will implement PhD by Prior Publication and Digital PhD programs to provide new pathways for our students, particularly those living regionally, remotely and internationally. We will continue our HDR internship program to provide students with work-integrated learning and industry-relevant experience.

Australia's Most Connected University

Research is fundamental to CDU achieving its vision of being Australia's most connected university. At CDU, research challenges are identified through our connections across disciplines, with the scientific and broader community, governments and industry.

Our Research Institutes and Centres, [Research Institute for Northern Agriculture](#), [Northern Hub](#), [Advanced Manufacturing Alliance](#), and [North Australia Centre for Autonomous Systems](#) will continue to develop new research capabilities and partner with commercial end-users to address industry research requirements. We are working to ensure research translation, encourage real world-application and [commercialisation](#). We will leverage investment made as part of the [Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre](#) to continue to develop ongoing projects. A robust [CDU-NTG Steering Committee](#) will guide our work and assist to identify strategic research priorities.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

Industry engagement is led at a Faculty level across CDU's three faculties (Arts and Society, Health and Science and Technology), and then within disciplines and courses. Our engagement with industry is bolstered by our dual sector delivery, which facilitates greater engagement with employers and ensures the connection between vocational education and training, higher education and research.

Our goal is to provide all our students opportunities to interact meaningfully with industry. We will provide these opportunities by actively engaging with industry through guest lectures, career fairs and work placements (internships) that are relevant to the student's discipline. We will also develop/modify curricula by obtaining industry feedback through our Industry Advisory Boards.

A [CDU-Northern Territory Government Partnership Agreement](#) allows collaboration with the NT Government as industry. This is especially important in Health and Education, but also spans key areas of Social Policy, Natural Resource Management, Primary Production, Business and Investment and the Arts.

For health programs, engagement directly with the Department of Health and private system providers aims to ensure graduating health professionals are matched to the workforce needs of the territory. Feedback is provided through Clinical Liaison Lecturers, Field supervisors and clinical educators following placements. Course Advisory Groups run annually for each discipline and all new courses.

For education, especially Initial Teacher Education course, CDU's agreements with the Department of Education and non-government school systems outline how CDU and schools work together to ensure high quality placements, manage challenges, and provide Professional Development for Professional Learning Leaders (those school staff who coordinate placements).

There is a strong focus on education of First Nations teachers, especially through a jointly funded NT Government Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) Program. RATE partners with school in remote communities to support the progression of those training in vocational education to become teacher assistants and then creating a pathway for those students to build their skills through degree education into becoming a qualified teacher.

Indigenous studies programs have deep engagement with Aboriginal communities that own the languages we teach or partner with on teaching or research projects. The engagement can be seen through the work outlined on [Ground Up – Northern Institute, CDU](#) and [First Nations Sovereignty and Diplomacy Centre | Charles Darwin University \(cdu.edu.au\)](#)

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by
Madonna Morton

Full name (please print)
First Assistant Secretary

Position
of the Department of Education



Signature

29/05/2024

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of
CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY

by
Professor Scott Bowman AO

Full name (please print)
Vice-Chancellor and President
Position



Signature

In the presence of:

Melanie Paine

Witness (please print)

Executive Assistant

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature