Australian Government

Department of Education

2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and CQUniversity Australia

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

In 2024, CQUniversity will embark on our new Strategic Plan 2024-2028, *We Change Lives*, reinforcing the University's vision to be Australia's most accessible and supportive university, connecting our regions to the world through innovative education, training and research excellence. The Plan goals and priorities are framed around the following three pillars:

People: CQUniversity is committed to fostering an environment of lifelong learning where people feel empowered and proud to learn, work and grow with CQUniversity. CQUniversity will be leaders in providing innovative, accessible, supportive and flexible learning, engaged workplaces and enriched societies.

Planet: CQUniversity is committed to advancing our social stewardship to ensure a sustainable future for the University and, in turn, build sustainable regions through our presence and research that aligns with societal needs. CQUniversity is focused on striking the right balance with our investment decisions to ensure a positive impact on the planet.

Partnerships: CQUniversity is committed to creating a brighter future through drive and imagination in close partnership with our communities and stakeholders. CQUniversity recognises and values our partners, actively developing our partnerships for the benefit of all.

The success of CQUniversity's Strategic Plan will be measured by:
- Improved student retention and satisfaction.
- Improved staff retention and satisfaction.
- A reduction in carbon emissions.
- Achieving an overall underlying operating surplus.
- Delivering upon its Reconciliation Action Plan.
- Developing local and global research and strategic partnerships.

Workforce and skill needs: To inform the new Strategic Plan, an exploration project entitled Education Futures was initiated by the University to assess the external landscape (domestic and global) and analyse the potential prospects presented by prevailing trends, in light of the demands expressed by CQUniversity's students and industries regarding their education, training and research needs.

Student and staff safety: CQUniversity is committed to developing and implementing strategies that promotes student and staff health, safety and wellbeing. Strategies include:
- MindWaves University Mental Health Strategy
- Safer Communities - CQUniversity initiatives
- Communication Charter
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Countering foreign interference: CQUniversity is committed to complying with the Australian Government's national security legislation, and to give compliance obligations priority consideration before proceeding with any international engagement. The University's procedures are aligned to the University Foreign Interference Taskforce (UFIT) *Guidelines on Countering Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector.*

Cyber and data security: CQUniversity is committed to managing cyber and data security in accordance with university policy and relevant laws and regulations. The following policy documents apply:
- Business Continuity Planning and Incident Management Policy and Procedure
- Cybersecurity Management Policy
- Information and Communications Technology Passwords Procedure
- Information and Communications Technology Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure
- Research Data Management Policy and Procedure

Freedom of speech and academic freedom: At its May 2019 meeting, CQUniversity's Academic Governance Committee approved its position statement on Academic Freedom, which is consistent with the principles of the Independent Review of Freedom of Speech in Australian Higher Education Providers. Subsequently, the University Council approved the Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy at its June 2021 meeting. Both policy documents outline CQUniversity's commitment and protection of freedom of lawful speech and academic freedom.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

CQUniversity prioritises equality of opportunity for all students. The *CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2024-2028, We Change Lives* outlines specific actions and initiatives that seek to "provide opportunity for all students, no matter where they are located, to access high quality education and training that supports their unique needs and wellbeing." CQUniversity consistently ranks among the top universities in Australia regarding the percentage of domestic students who identify as aligning with a specific equity group. With over 90% of our students belonging to one or more equity groups, CQUniversity leads the nation in the percentage of students from Low SES backgrounds, ranks second for the number of regional and remote students, and is fourth in the country for Indigenous student enrolments.

Aligning with our commitment to enhancing the learning experience for equity students and to fulfill the key priorities of our strategic plan, the following actions will be a focal point for 2024, with the overall target for CQUniversity being to increase overall retention for these groups by 4%:

- ***Access and participation assurance***: a university-wide assessment of our current performance on access, progression and student success in order to remove barriers to CQUniversity (Strategic Plan p.26)
- ***Student Experience Lifecycle***: alignment of our academic and personal supports at every stage of the student lifecycle, from pre-enrolment through to graduation and beyond (Strategic Plan p.26) so as to meet the specific support needs of all our students, whatever their specific circumstances and equity group. Part of this work will be to ensure CQUniversity meets and exceeds the expectations outlined in the 2023 amendments to the *Higher Education Support Act,* requiring institutions to ensure that students in need of support are identified and supported systematically and appropriately.
- Ongoing implementation of the CQU ***Reconciliation Action Plan*** and the development of the *CQU Accessibility and Inclusion Plan.*
- CQUniversity will also commence the rollout of our ***Retention Equity Programme***. Building on our success in specific projects that support students from under-represented and equity backgrounds, this programme of work will seek to coordinate our retention efforts for equity group students in a single programme, develop a university-wide framework for student engagement and success, robustly evaluate the impact of each support measure, ramp up support that proves to have high impact, and redeploy resources that are currently achieving minimal impact. A central feature of the programme will be the creation of a Student Success Dashboard giving real-time indicators of student progression and satisfaction. Key workstreams in the programme include:

Workstream	Activities	Target number of students reached
Onboarding, access and induction	Introduce a coordinated onboarding programme with student readiness diagnostic	All new CQU students
	STEPS university preparation program	400
	CQU Connect outreach to equity groups in schools	350+
Student support	Data-driven workflow to holistically manage academic and non-academic support needs	All CQU students
	Peer-assisted student support programme	300+
	Promoting student mental health and wellbeing	1400
	Removing financial barriers for student success (scholarships)	1200+
	Enhancing personalised and context-sensitive support for our indigenous students	900+

Workstream	Activities	Target number of students reached
Academic design and delivery	Formative assessment for retention	3500
	Embedded foundational academic skills	2000
International	*Targeted programme of support for international students. Sits outside this funding stream and remit.*	*n/a*
Student Success Dashboard	Real-time indicators of student progress and satisfaction	All CQU students

The *Retention Equity Program* is a central implementation strategy for the delivery if the *CQU HECG Equity Plan*. This plan identifies $12.6 million of HECG funding dedicated to new or enhanced initiatives to support students from equity groups. These initiatives include but are not limited to:

- academic skills support
- onboarding and transition support for equity groups
- pathways from VET to HE
- data-driven whole-of-university student support and engagement model
- *Mindwaves 2.0* mental health strategy for rural, regional and first-in-family students

Strategies for Improving Teaching and learning

CQUniversity provides high-quality learning experiences across a distributed network that enables education opportunities for a diverse range of students. For 2024, CQUniversity will continue to deliver upon our commitment to continual improvement, and from a teaching and learning perspective will focus on:

- Supporting the roll out of the University wide retention program through targeted and personalised student support.
- Ensuring improved accessibility in curriculum and delivery modes (online and on-campus)
- Building the capacity of our educators in quality of delivery and scholarship of learning and teaching.

RETENTION

From a teaching and learning standpoint, the key focus areas for retention in 2024 will include international and domestic students support, academic design and delivery, induction, onboarding and student readiness. These focus areas will be underpinned by two sets of enabling activities, around staff capacity building, and the scholarship of learning and teaching.

A revised University-wide Student Engagement and Success Framework will be developed to drive change and ensure whole-of-university coordination of activities. Key focus areas set out in the framework will include establishing a university-wide model for Student Engagement and Success Advising to support students, and targeted projects that focus on revising curriculum to reduce barriers for equity-based students including low socioeconomic students, regional students, indigenous students, and students with a disability. The program of work will also explore the reasons for their withdrawal and/or slow progression.

Additionally, CQUniversity's professionalised curriculum will continue to facilitate retention and support future skills requirements by embedding industry connections and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) components in our courses, with a centralised WIL team supporting student placements across our network. Other opportunities for engaging with industry will also be promoted through the recently established Corporate Training Solutions, which actively responds to local, regional and national industry priorities.

These initiatives will be further enhanced through the renewal of our association with Ashoka U to align curriculum with global initiatives in social innovation and sustainability.

ACCESSIBLE CURRICULUM

In 2024, a "One University" Accessibility and Inclusion Plan will be developed to drive accessibility initiatives throughout the organisation. The plan will be complemented by a robust technology strategy that embeds Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Success will be measured by reduction in requests for amendment or adjustment associated with assessment, and an increase in the number of units with UDL in their online delivery.

EDUCATOR CAPABILITY

To support retention and accessibility initiatives, a focus on building educator capability will improve the quality of classroom and assessment experience for students. Initiatives include a revised program that links new staff orientation and onboarding with a planned career framework to support professional advancement.

This aligns with a newly developed Advance HE (UK) Fellowship program called Lift, which will be delivered in collaboration with UniSQ. This program aims to self-accredit approximately 40 staff in 2024 and train peer reviewers and mentors to support the program.

CQUniversity's scholarly community will also be supported through a refreshed Scholarly Activity Framework and ongoing initiatives including a Learning and Teaching week, regular professional development through a 'Transforming Teaching' program, and dedicated Communities of Practice (CoP) focusing on technology-enhanced learning, Generative Artificial Intelligence, and First Nations and social innovation in Education.

Overall success for 2024 will be measured by increased targeted retention initiatives and improved student completion and progress rates, the development and implementation of a "One University" Accessibility Plan, and the number of academic staff engaged in scholarship and educator capability initiatives.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

CQUniversity maintains its commitment to applied research, delivering impact for our communities and connecting our regions to the world through research engagement and collaboration. The University invests in high quality applied research across a range of focus areas, evidenced by the establishment and continuous review of our research institutes and centres, strategic research appointments, and the development of collaborative external relationships, particularly where this will benefit the productivity and sustainability of regional Australia.

CQUniversity encourages researchers to push the boundaries of current knowledge and share their research expertise and findings to improve productivity, prosperity, quality of life and global sustainability. To achieve this, CQUniversity delivers a suite of researcher and research-student development programs to that focus on cultivating skills such as strategic planning, supervision, research excellence, ethics and leadership.

CQUniversity continues to innovate its Research Higher Degree program and will be launching a new modularised approach to first-year research coursework and skills development in 2024, to ensure our research students have the skills needed for successful completion. CQUniversity will continue to expand opportunities for research candidates to develop industry-relevant skills through placements and internships, including PhD (Industry), and the continued delivery of the CQUniversity Elevate Scholarship program, to support collaborative, industry-driven research higher degree projects.

CQUniversity's research performance will be measured through benchmarking, both internally and externally, across a number of metrics such as external research income, research student load and completions, international rankings, patents and citations. CQUniversity continues to

grow our entrepreneurial collaborations to encourage innovation and technology development, and its extension into society. In 2024, a review will be undertaken on our Commercialisation Services area, to ensure a strong future and return on investment.

The research activities at CQUniversity are supported by an established framework to ensure appropriate governance and legislative compliance under the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research. The 2024 CQUniversity Operational Plan for the Research Division captures our aspirations, strategies, and activities, translating them into Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with specified targets and expected outcomes

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

CQUniversity is committed to collaborating with key industry partners on research projects that matter to our regions and convert knowledge into tangible outcomes. At CQUniversity, it is vital that we consider regional needs and capture opportunities that deliver meaningful benefit to our local communities and industry. CQUniversity opens our campuses to industry and community partners to co-locate and establish embedded relationships that provide mutual benefits.

CQUniversity continues to expand opportunities for research candidates with industry through the PhD (Industry) and the Elevate Scholarship Scheme. The Elevate Scheme supports CQUniversity researchers and research students to build productive relationships with industry and community partners.

CQUniversity has established several MOU partnerships with key industries within our regions that have significant influence on regional economies. These MOUs describe a governance and management structure that comprises regular advisory board meetings of organisation leadership to reflect on performance and identify opportunities, including research engagement, training and education.

SIGNED for and on behalf of
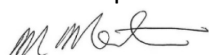
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by

Madonna Morton
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Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary
_____

Position

of the Department of Education

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Signature

29/05/2024
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Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY

by

Professor Nick Klomp
_____

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor and President

Position

Nick Klomp (signature)
_____

Signature

In the presence of:

Melissa Misztal
_____

Witness (please print)

Chief of Staff

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Misztal (signature)
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Signature