



2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and JAMES COOK 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

James Cook University's strategic intent is to create a brighter future for life in the tropics and beyond through education and research that make a difference locally, and globally. Our [Corporate Strategy](#) builds upon our strategic direction and expresses how we will provide value in learning and teaching, research and engagement for the region, nation and global tropics.

JCU is one of the few universities serving Northern Australia and the only research-intensive university serving the needs of underprivileged northern communities with a comprehensive portfolio of courses and focus on equity of opportunity. Our footprint extends from the Torres Strait to Mackay in the south, and Mount Isa in the west, and our graduates are retained to meet the diverse workforce needs of industries across the north. JCU, with our Singapore campus, is a strong partner for Australian interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Key objectives for 2024:

1. Financial sustainability. JCU is engaging fully with Accord reviews and consultations seeking to address the sector-wide challenge of securing sustainable regional education delivery to increase equity attainment rates. We engage in ongoing innovation cycles, including automation and artificial intelligence, seeking efficiencies so we have capacity to focus strongly on meeting the educational and research needs of the equity communities we serve. JCU has higher costs, primarily wages and infrastructure, in serving a geographically dispersed, thin population base who have lower levels of academic preparedness.

2. Develop graduates who have the knowledge, skills and attributes to meet the needs of tropical communities and succeed in a global workforce. This requires working in partnership with others (including schools and TAFE/VET) to build capability within the population to engage in post-school education. We aim to provide high-quality, personalised support, authentic learning experiences, opportunity for Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and experiences with innovation ecosystems, including AI. Success can be measured by increased higher education attainment levels in the communities we serve, increased student satisfaction, and consistently excellent Graduate Outcomes Surveys.

3. Sustainable research workforce catering to priorities for Northern Australia. JCU's regional research workforce can be sustained with robust management of equity issues, research education, staff training and development, recruitment and succession and an enduring focus on Indigenous priorities. Our programs need to overcome regional challenges, building capacity for the research that underpins sustainable and resilient communities, with emphasis on areas of priority to Northern Australia. Success can be measured through our performance in delivering on contract and partnership agreements, HERDC research and partnered research income and quality of research outputs.

4. Community/industry engagement. As a civic university, JCU is embedded in the community and industry, developing work-integrated learning (WIL), internships, business development, innovation and social and commercial capabilities in the region. JCU strengthens industry-university engagement and mobility, knowledge gain and IP generation across all sectors and partners with Governments in regional development. Success can be measured by increased co-location with industry, increased WIL, increases in industry-engaged research and continuing roles in community development, economic development bodies and government programs for regional development.

JCU has a range of policies and practices supporting student and staff equity, safety and wellbeing (including bullying, discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct, and mental health, gender equity, Indigenous workforce plans, integrity matters, countering foreign interference, cyber and data security, freedom of speech and academic freedom. We prioritise integrating policy and practice across staff and student domains to ensure consistency, coherency and integrity in policy intent and outcomes.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

JCU serves a highly diverse community and student population and has an enduring and visible commitment to equity and meeting the needs of our region. JCU's equity-based goals are outlined in the latest HEPPP Activity Plan 2024.

JCU, as a recipient of a Higher Education Continuity Grant (HECG), will be working with the Department on the required separate 'Equity Plan'. JCU values the short-term continuity for operations in 2024/25 provided through the HECG and looks forward to longer-term funding stability for regional education delivery and longer-term policy alignment and stability for delivering on equity priorities expected to result from the Government's implementation of Accord-informed reform.

Key Priorities:

1. Ensuring the success and retention of Indigenous students. Indigenous enrolments currently are 5.4% of total enrolments at JCU, well above the sector average of 2.1%. JCU has a plan to increase the Indigenous enrolment numbers from 600+ students to levels above 1,000 by 2030, and to target completion rates well above the sector average. JCU will achieve this through evidence-based learning support services developed by the [JCU Indigenous Education and Research Centre](#) (IERC), which has already demonstrated positive effects on [academic performance](#). We will seek to graduate 150+ Indigenous students every year, ready for entry into professional careers.

2. Providing access and aspirations for regional, rural and remote (RRR) communities and low SES students. Three out of every four students at JCU's Townsville and Cairns campuses come from RRR areas. JCU's 2024 Outreach Framework is sharply focussed on building academic readiness and preparedness for university study. This framework of activities, targeting primary, secondary and non-school leaver groups, includes in-school activities, careers education, extra-curricular programs, academic tutoring, residential experiences, and financial support. This work is supported by institutional and external governance groups. JCU actively collaborates with regional, rural and remote communities to elevate aspirations and ensure university study is an attainable option for school students, conducting school visits to selected schools across north and far north Queensland, as well Mount Isa and Gulf regions. These visits serve to raise awareness and foster aspiration to attend university. Under the Widening Participation Consortium, JCU serves the greatest number of RRR schools in Queensland. We have formed partnerships with Cape York Country University Centre (CUC) and Tableland University Centre to coordinate outreach, capability building, and student support activities in these locations.

JCU provides access to university studies for under-represented student populations via open access enabling pathways such as [JCU Prep](#). This flexible program, tailored around students' needs, provides access to university study for students from identified equity groups (including Indigenous students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, rural and remote students, and students with a disability), by focusing on essential academic skills and subject knowledge, and allowing them to meet the prerequisites for many JCU undergraduate degrees. No prior qualifications or ATAR are required for enrolment in this supportive learning environment and successful completion of JCU Prep can lead to direct entry into various JCU bachelor's degree programs. There are substantial opportunities for JCU to further build on this and extend the University's reach. JCU will offer para-professional qualifications within professional bachelor/bachelor (Honors) degrees to enable students to transition from a TAFE trade qualification through to a para-professional qualification via an Associate Degree, onto attaining a Bachelor Degree and associated professional qualification. This offering provides critical pathways for growing human capital in the north.

3. Inclusive learning design aligned to JCU student demographic. Our learning design reflects student demand for accessible learning, achieved through building educator capability in universal learning design (UDL) in the Settle to Study professional development and adoption of ALLY software in the learning management system. Widening our student enrolment is key to reskilling and upskilling regional workforces and inclusive learning design works to assure student success in their selected pathways and degrees. Our success is measured by our performance against government equity measures including access, participation and attainment rates.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

1. Transformative Education. Students at JCU are engaged in learning communities with educators, researchers and industry in which knowledge is tested and new knowledge is created and applied to understanding or solving real world dilemmas. Students transform their understanding of themselves and the world engaging in a process of self-formation leading to successful graduate outcomes. In 2024, JCU will continue to adapt modes of course delivery to attend to student and workforce needs. Models of blended learning are building digital literacies and include JCU Flex, Hybrid plus residential, and concurrent teaching across locations to afford access to expertise in disciplines. The adoption/adaptation of artificial intelligence in learning and teaching, assessment, and skill development are being explored to align with workforce skills whilst ensuring academic integrity. Such transformative education processes involve valuing our educators (academics and professional/technical staff) engaged in the learning communities to build their capabilities through a personalised professional development and recognition framework.

2. Enhanced Work-Integrated Learning. JCU has systematised the visibility of WIL with WIL credit bearing subjects highlighted within the Curriculum Management System, development of a centralised WIL placement team to work with disciplines and industry, and a WIL Community of Practice. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment policy requires all courses to provide opportunities for student placements and/or authentic projects to advance skills and experience, as well as the oversight of an expert/disciplinary consultative panel, comprising internal and external stakeholders, who meets at least yearly to provide input on curriculum.

3. Student Services and Supports. Entering a learning partnership with all students is critical to student success. Domestic and international student admission to all coursework courses, and cross-institutional and miscellaneous admission adhere to the Admission Policy, and progression is monitored as per the Academic Progression Policy. Student success is enabled through inclusive, student-centred approaches such as personalised tier service models (particularly international students), peer supports including [Peer Assisted Study Sessions](#) (PASS), inclusive learning design, key interventions, and a coordinated approach to student feedback. JCU's Support for Students Policy provides an overarching framework to ensure appropriate and contextualised support strategies and services for students, which enables students to develop help seeking behaviours and capabilities to successfully complete their studies. A whole-of-institution student and staff Mental Health and Wellness Strategy, including partnerships with agencies and other stakeholders has been implemented, and includes the monitoring of actions across domains of learn, work, support and live. Further, the [JCU Respect](#) modules and training maintain a continued focus on the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual assault and promote student safety and wellbeing.

4. Indigenous education. The IERC provide pathways and courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to ensure they have the right preparation for their studies and chosen professions. JCU also provides courses for all students to ensure they have the right preparation for professional work in Indigenous communities. Staff at the IERC case-manage every Indigenous student no matter what course they are enrolled in. IERC learning support services are based on real-time data and with computational capacity to identify trends and predict outcomes. Staff have timely information to mount early intervention strategies as well as astute knowledge on what/where to target tutorial support. Since the adoption of these new services the retention rate for Indigenous students has reached 76%, reducing the gap to non-Indigenous students (83%). JCU is prioritising the expansion of these evidence-based services.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

1. Research. JCU prioritises research that is nationally and internationally recognised for its excellence and that addresses the current and emerging challenges facing our region and the Tropics. JCU's goal is to deliver globally relevant solutions and impact to the benefit of our local communities and end-users.

JCU is heavily engaged in Indigenous-led research, focusing on themes of self-determination, education and environmental management. For example, JCU will lead the commencement of the ARC Centre for Excellence in Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures to develop complementary Indigenous and Western knowledge frameworks for sustainable land and sea management planning, with initial success measured by recruitment of key roles and completion of partner contract agreements.

We will grow and diversify our research portfolio through support schemes to build researcher capability, engagement with industry partners and engagement with other higher education institutions. JCU will engage to further regional development and workforce in northern Australia, including with the [Northern Australia Universities Alliance](#) and the Cooperative Research Centre for Northern Australia e.g. the Water Security for North Australia Program with CQU and CDU.

We will deliver on our key research areas of health and medicine, the environment, aquaculture and biological sciences, and regional development. We will work with our partners, e.g. with hospital and health services to deliver translational research for a NHMRC Synergy Grant on abdominal aortic aneurysm and in the delivery of the Northern Australia Regional Digital Health Collaboration, and e.g. with local and global partners in the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program to facilitate protection of the Great Barrier Reef.

Our research success will be measured by HERDC research income, partnered research income and quality of research outputs.

2. Research Training. JCU will continue to offer world-class research education through higher degrees by research (HDR). We will increase our support for HDR students through the implementation of a Research Training Network, which will provide cohort-building experiences and diversified research skills-related training including for non-academic career outcomes. We will measure the success of our HDR training through number of student completions and engagement with industry HDR scholarships.

3. Innovation and commercialisation. JCU will develop an innovation culture for staff and HDR students through delivery of a series of [programs and workshops](#) in innovation such as the Impact 10X program, which attracts industry sponsorship and engagement. We will continue to engage with [JourneyTech](#), our commercialisation partner and support start-ups in our region through the [JCU Ideas Lab](#). We will revise our IP policy to facilitate utilisation of JCU innovations. Success will be measured by innovation disclosures and patents.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

1. The imperative. Australia's national ambition to transition to a net-zero economy will depend in large part on the material and human resources of Northern Australia, and JCU has a key role to play in assisting communities, industries and government in tackling large scale change and development. The move from a low value-added primary production economy to a knowledge-based economy in Northern Australia will require and foster better human capital retention, lead to significant multiplier effects, support Indigenous self-determination, as well as higher value trade and export of goods and services.

Industry, community and all levels of government have diverse and unique research and innovation needs in the north, including the conservation of biodiversity, tropical health and medicine, and technological solutions for serving distributed rural populations. JCU has a key role to play in deepening the national economy, and this rests on research and innovation in these key area. Expertise in these areas supports national geo-strategic and defence considerations, as well as forming the basis of emerging service export industries. In 2024, the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellors will spend significant time with industry, community and political leaders across the LGAs JCU serves to support the alignment of coherent, evidence-based, regional development actions that can be collectively championed and achieved.

2. Colocation. As a comprehensive, research-intensive university JCU is deeply embedded in the businesses and communities we serve (with WIL, discussed earlier in the Compact, being a major aspect of our industry relationships/engagement). JCU has undertaken a strategy to increase co-location of industry and agencies on our physical campuses via the National Priorities Linkage Fund (NPILF) increasing industry partners on campus by over 40% between 2021-2024. JCU will continue through increasing industry colocation and co-development of shared precincts, for example the Dugurrdja precinct with health partners in Cairns, and TropiQ precinct in Townsville, to be a catalyst for innovation and connecting northern Australia to the global economy.

3. Large projects and new partnerships. JCU will continue to engage with industry on large projects, e.g., as a key partner in the [Resources Technology and Critical Minerals Trailblazer](#) led by Curtin University and as a lead of the [Tropical North Queensland Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub](#) (Future Drought Fund) together with partners in the agricultural sector. We will seek further opportunities to engage with industry, including around emerging issues of decarbonisation and renewable energy.

We will prioritise the activation of new industry partnerships through internal funding schemes, a renewed policy and approach for research centres and institutes that facilitates impact, translation and external engagement, and through investment in business development.

We will uplift researcher capability in engagement with industry and in the co-design approach with development of impact pathways for research. These will lead to securing and delivering joint research projects with industry and be measured by increased Category 2-4 HERDC research income and increased research outcomes co-authored with industry or other partners.

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
JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY

by

Simon Biggs

Full name (please print)

Vice Chancellor and President

Position



Signature

In the presence of:

Karyn Clay

Witness (please print)

Executive Support Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature