Australian Government

Department of Education

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

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

The University is incorporated under the *University of Canberra Act 1989* of the Australian Capital Territory.

The University is committed to serving the people of Canberra and the region through professional education and applied research and is influential in a range of disciplines including health and wellbeing, nursing, education, information technology, creative industries, communications, architecture and design, sport, and science.

In 2023 University of Canberra launched a decadal strategy, **Connected**.

Our ambition for the coming 10 years is to be a global leader in driving equality of opportunity. A commitment that ensures we are the most accessible university in Australia; building an international identity for UC that celebrates, and is built upon, the importance of our place, one of national and international decision making. We proudly embrace our role as the university of the nation's capital.

Connected to Canberra – Building sustainable communities through deep collaborations that are Canberra-focussed and globally relevant.

Connected for Life – Partnering for life with our students to shape our economic, social, and cultural futures.

Connected UC – Delivering an outstanding, digitally connected experience that removes barriers to access.

The University also has in place a *Campus Master Plan*, a *Sports Strategy*, and a stretch *Reconciliation Action Plan*, and is soon to release a *Research Plan*.

The University is also soon to publish a new *Indigenous Leadership Strategy.* This strategy aims to position UC as the preferred university for Indigenous students by improving access to opportunities and support, and to study in an environment that promotes Indigenous leadership. The strategy includes an Indigenous Student Voice as a key engagement point with our Indigenous students, and the preparation of a dedicated Indigenous Student Success Framework. Our Ngunnawal Centre leads the delivery of measurably effective support for current Indigenous students, and provides services such as cultural and pastoral support, tutoring assistance, scholarships and study spaces. We aim to raise our Indigenous Students to be 3.0% of our domestic students by 2027, and to increase our Indigenous Student completion rates year-on-year with an aim to increase Indigenous Student completion rates to the same as other domestic students.

The University is highly engaged in the sector and works with university and research networks and all levels of government and industry on national priorities.

Priorities include:

Improving equity outcomes: University of Canberra has an unwavering commitment to reducing barriers for all people from diverse backgrounds with the ability to access a university education. We are proud that two in five or our students are first-in-family, and that in both 2021 and 2022 the University was ranked first in the world for SDG10 Reduced Inequalities in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. We are committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, and aim to be a university of choice for underrepresented groups.

Engagement with industry around workforce skills and needs: University of Canberra is sector leading for work-integrated learning. Our graduates across all study areas enjoy high employment rates and we are proud to meet the workforce needs of Canberra and beyond. We facilitate work-integrated learning across all levels at the University, including internships for undergraduate through our *Professional Practice Core Framework* and for PHD candidates through our *PhD Plus program*.

Countering foreign interference and cyber security: The University has a robust cybersecurity strategy that promotes resilience and a security-first culture. This includes on-going vulnerability management and awareness training program. The University has a defined cybersecurity incidence response plan that feeds into the university-wide Critical Incident Management Team.

Upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom: The University values freedom of speech and academic freedom and has in recent years been actively engaged with the policy matter and reviewed internal policies. In 2021 the University's Council approved an Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy to align with the Model Code.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

The University of Canberra is likely to receive funding under the Higher Education Continuity Guarantee for 2024 and 2025 and is preparing an Equity Plan. The University of Canberra Equity Plan will detail how unspent amounts from its MBGA will be used to support equity outcomes for under-represented groups. Initiatives under the Equity Plan will be in addition to current strategies for improving equality of opportunity in higher education.

Current Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

Our Student Success Framework describes how we support students and ensure their success from their first contact with the University to graduation and beyond. UC embraces the idea that success should be viewed as a holistic concept, addressing needs before, during, after and outside study. Our Framework is based on a student lifecycle, whole-of-institution approach underpinned by our value Galambany – that together we work to empower, connect and share knowledge. We work with students as partners, with shared responsibility for success, and proactively engage with our students from the start of their journey.

The University runs numerous cohort-specific programs to support students from underrepresented groups access and succeed at their studies. These programs focus on the Access, Transition and Participation phases of the student lifecycle. Our approach is informed by the student voice as part of our students as partners focus. These programs include individual, one-on-one transition appointments at commencement to raise awareness of support available and devising a plan for success, regular checkpoints and follow-up, social events for students to meet other students, scholarships and other forms of financial support. Our programs are targeted, individualised and ongoing; they provide regular and continued support; embrace a holistic approach and engagement across the University; and are based on continued equity related research.

This support includes a dedicated Inclusion UC service to support students with a disability and/or ongoing health conditions to successfully complete their studies at UC on an equal participation basis. This service has seen increased demand in recent years. In addition to Reasonable Adjustment Plans to support these

students, UC is trialling innovative programs such as an Occupational Therapy student led program that delivered individualised support for neurodivergent students and students with complex disabilities.

The University annually reviews cohort-specific retention and success outcomes to identify areas for improvement. Our targets are 85.3% retention rate for UC students in 2027 and a success rate (units of study pass rate) of 86.81% in 2021.The University also has KPIs for the proportion of domestic students that are low-SES (target 6.3% by 2027) and First in Family (42.0% by 2027). While UC is aware that we have many students from low SES backgrounds, ACT government policy that integrates housing types across all ACT suburbs means that there are no postcodes classified as low SES in the ACT. Consequently, our current measure of participation rate of low SES students does not accurately reflect our student body. We provide high levels of support for these students through the provision of a free food pantry, bulk billing medical and counselling practice on campus, free clinical psychology services for students, and bursaries, financial aid and scholarships.

The University runs a number of community outreach programs aimed at increasing aspiration to study from typically underrepresented student groups. This includes to schools from Canberra, the Capital Region and NSW South Coast, many from lower SES, regional or rural areas. These programs include Aspire UC to increase desire for higher education, UC 4 Yourself on-campus program to expose students to a University Experience, a "Possible Futures" passport for primary school students and access and participation scholarships. These programs help progress towards our student participation KPIs for Indigenous Students (3.0% by 2027), low-SES (6.3% by 2027) and First in Family (42.0% by 2027).

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

A key program under *Connected* is to Reimagine Our Education Offerings, including aligning to match jobs and needs of the future, deliver a dynamic and engaging digital offering, broaden access and opportunity, and deliver exceptional student experience and success. Our focus on enhanced course delivery flexibility will increase opportunities for those with potential. This is being accomplished through an expanded capacity and capability to develop and deliver online course content for students to study away from campus, or around their other commitments. The University is investing in expanded education design and development of high quality digital content to support this flexibility.

The University publishes it admissions transparency information on an easy to access website, part of our Future Students webpages. Information on individual courses is available via a search function on this webpage.

The University has a strategic KPI of an 85.3% retention rate for UC students in 2027. In addition to study support and cohort-specific support strategies to assist students to continue and complete their course, the University has recently established a Student Retention Team. This team uses a data-driven and personalised approach to identify students at-risk of not continuing their studies and contact them individually to provide support, be it with specific issues or to link with other support services including wellbeing and study support. This approach has resulted in significant numbers of students continuing their studies who may otherwise have cease their course, as well as providing valuable insights on issues for action at an institutional level.

The University has long had an identity as an institution focused on graduate employment and preparing students for the professions. UC aims for 88.8% of our students reporting being employed in the Graduate Outcomes Survey in 2027. We embed work skills throughout our curriculum, give our students multiple work-integrated learning and placement/internship experiences, and expand their employability through our Careers UC service. This includes assisting students attain paid positions during their studies, curriculum-integrated and supported work-integrated learning, and connections with more than 1,000 employers. A recent survey of employers showed nearly 95% satisfaction with our student undertaking WIL activities at surveyed organisations.

The University has a specialist team for support for International Students, including specialised support staff for wellbeing and International Student Advisors. This team provides targeted and specialised support to all UC international students with regards to any changes to their study visa enquiries and processes and provide advice and guidance in alignment with the ESOS Framework to ensure that students are

appropriately supported to succeed at UC. The team also supports students with settling into life at UC and Canberra; connections to UC, other students and the community; programs to enhance study, health and wellbeing; and tailored support for Australia Awards and under-18 students. As part of this support, the University guarantees student accommodation for new and continuing International Students, as well as for all first-year domestic students, at our Residences on-campus and nearby.

In 2023, the University approved a new Academic Progress Policy. This policy ensures that academic progress is proactively monitored, students at-risk of not completing their studies are identified as early as possible, and that there are academic practices and processes to support and improve student academic progress. The University employs a number of strategies both within units of study and at organisation level to identify students who are at-risk of not progressing. A Student Readiness Survey is disseminated to identify issues emerging across the student body and allows students to identify their needs for support.

The University has a recently approved Support for Students Policy and offers a wide range of support services to students including Academic Skills and Knowledge (ASK) Advisors, Study Skills Learning Advisors, Peer Assisted Learning Sessions (PALS), Student Mentors, Studiosity online study help, support for online study, and library support.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

In 2024 the University launched a new research plan to underpin the next five years of research growth. The University aspires to be recognised both locally and globally for the impact our research has on people and place. UC's research is deliberately focussed towards practical and applied research across key areas of university strength and community need. UC recognises the need to be focussed to ensure quality and impact.

Driving impact is an important pillar of the new research plan. UC will identify and invest in missions central to UC's identity and values. Impact starts with great ideas and great connections with the world outside academia, and the investment in missions will be driven through an impact lens. There are several national priorities to underpin sovereign capability where UC can, and should, make major contributions, including tackling disadvantage particularly for Indigenous communities, improving the health and well-being of our population, addressing urgent as well as long-term environmental challenges and lifting literacy and numeracy across the country. UC will develop guidelines for funding of impact-led projects, and a framework to recognise research impact at individual, group, university and community levels.

A key pillar of the research plan is fostering the research environment. This includes ensuring that researchers have time allocated to undertake high quality research, that time is well used, and that appropriate resources, infrastructure and professional support are provided. UC aims to lift its research profile to ensure its place in Australia's national research system is well understood, and support recruitment and retention of high-quality staff and HDR candidates. Measures of success include levels of engagement with partners of choice; increased HDR load, completions and satisfaction; and increased awareness of UC research and its value.

Enhancing research capacity and capability is vital. Increased expectations will be supported by lifting investment in people, ensuring that UC is attracting, developing and retaining talent. A new early career researcher program has been launched and a revamped framework for researcher development will lift engagement in development opportunities. The revised programs will better equip our researchers to be competitive in the research funding environment whilst retaining a focus on impact and engagement with our communities, fulfilling UC's mission as the University for Canberra and our region. Measures of success will include some traditional measures (publications, citations, international collaborations, awarded income) but UC will also have indicators focussed on increasing the number of Indigenous staff and HDR candidates, ROI on internal research funding, proportion of research active academics and diversity of funding sources.

UC works to enhance the mechanisms for technology transfer and the commercialization of research outputs. This involves protecting intellectual property, licensing new technologies to existing companies, or spinning off startups. It's essential to have clear policies and support structures in place to facilitate this process. For example, the university is a founding member of the Canberra Innovation Network.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

Engaging with industry at the University of Canberra is multifaceted and core to the mission of the University to be a hub of applied education and research. Below are a few strategies that are being deployed to engage industry.

Collaborative Research Projects: The University of Canberra conducts joint research projects with industry partners that align with both the academic interests of the university and the practical needs of the industry. This fosters a mutually beneficial relationship, allowing for the sharing of resources, expertise, and facilities. For example: https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/media/newsroom/2023/august/uc-and-partners-launch-open-source-institute

Internship and Placement Programs: The University of Canberra works with industry to develop structured internship and work placement programs. This not only provides students with valuable real-world experience but also serves as a bridge between academia and industry, fostering relationships and potential employment opportunities. For example: https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/media/newsroom/2024/january/purdon-placements-lead-to-career-success

Industry Advisory Boards: The University of Canberra works with industry advisory boards consisting of professionals from relevant sectors to provide input on curriculum development, research priorities, and emerging industry trends. This ensures that academic programs remain relevant and responsive to industry needs. For example: https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/faculties/busgovlaw/canberra-business-school-cbs/advisory-board

Continuing Education and Executive Training: The University offers continuing education and executive training programs tailored to industry needs. These programs can provide current professionals with advanced skills and knowledge, thereby strengthening ties with the industry and positioning the university as a key provider of professional development. For example: https://the-riotact.com/university-of-canberra-to-offer-microcredentials-in-pilot-program-to-address-skills-shortages/689811

Networking Events and Industry Days: The University organises networking events, industry days, and technology showcases that bring together researchers, students, and industry professionals. These events are excellent opportunities for knowledge exchange, identifying research needs, and fostering collaborations. For example: https://www.canberra.edu.au/events/Home/Event/270734

Research Consortia and Partnerships: The University participates in or form research consortia that include multiple universities and industry partners. Such consortia can tackle large-scale, interdisciplinary research challenges that are of significant interest to industry, leveraging the diverse expertise and resources of the consortium members. For example: https://digitalhealthcrc.com/participants/

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

University of Canberra

by

Lucy Johnston
_____
Full name (please print)

Interim Vice-Chancellor & President
Position

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Signature

In the presence of:

Corinna Dalton
_____
Witness (please print)

Senior Executive Assistant
Position or profession of witness (please print)

Corinna Dalton
_____
Signature