



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

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

Through education and research, we aim to make a positive contribution for Tasmania and from Tasmania to the world. Our mission, as outlined in our [University of Tasmania Strategic Plan 2019-2024](#), is two-fold: as the only University in the State, we have a place-based mission to serve our State and its regions; and equally, to support progress in a sustainable way, socially, economically, and culturally.

A key element of our mission is to create access to education for our community and beyond. We are taking steps this year to develop options to strengthen our focus on equity cohorts. This will give rise to a further set of initiatives to be delivered in 2025-2026. The Universities Accord Final Report provides for a place-based approach to improving educational access and equity for those who are educationally disadvantaged. As the only university based in Tasmania, we train much of the State's future workforce. We strongly advocate for and invest in our regional campuses, distinctive offerings and fit-for-purpose facilities to promote educational access and participation, and to improve life-long learning and skills development across the State. The extension of the HECG funding is essential to support the University in building on its success in supporting equity students and to ensure we deliver new and expanded initiatives in 2024 as detailed in the section "Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education".

During 2024 we will continue to demonstrate our commitment to serving Tasmania, with examples including the provision of valuable community services at our Launceston campus through a tax clinic and a psychology clinic, as well as the expansion of our course offerings in allied health, which aim to provide the professionals that are so desperately needed in Tasmania.

Ensuring Student and Staff Safety

The [Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#) sets out our commitment to ensuring a safe and healthy university environment for students and staff. Our [Behaviour Policy](#) outlines the University's expectations for

appropriate behaviour, how we support members of our community, how reporting and disclosures work, as well as potential consequences. These policies are supported by detailed procedures, including the [Behaviour Procedure](#). In 2024 we are undertaking a program of work to strengthen our alignment with the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.

Upholding Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

Considering the role universities play as places of debate, discussion and the sharing and testing of ideas, policies regarding academic freedom and free speech are a critical element of the governance framework when it comes to creating a safe and respectful community. The University of Tasmania fully subscribes to the principles of the Model Code. The University's entire policy suite was revised in 2020, and the University meets and, in some cases, exceeds the Model Code through its new policies. Our strong commitment to academic freedom and free speech at the University of Tasmania is captured in our [Academic Freedom and Free Speech Policy](#). We will actively protect members of our community exercising their rights to lawful speech, as we have done in the past.

Countering Foreign Interference

We will remain vigilant in countering foreign interference, through development of a Cyber Security Threat and Risk Assessment and an accompanying 3-year roadmap to track progress. This will embed control procedures that allow for the management of incident prevention, which aligns with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner best-practice and with ASIO on due diligence processes. The process also allows implementation of the principle of least privilege deployment process for critical operating systems and the identification of research and IP likely to be of value to foreign partners.

Cyber and Data Security

Effective management of information and cyber security enables the strategic objectives of the University to be met while managing risks and protecting systems and information from cyber threats. Our [Data and Information Governance Policy](#) outlines our commitment to responsible risk management, safeguards systems and information, and maximises information value ethically and compliantly while minimising costs and risks associated with holding information.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

The University of Tasmania's strategic plan articulates our mission to enhance student equity and outcomes through all that we do, including a clear focus on regional access and delivery as the only higher education provider serving the whole of Tasmania. Our institutional equity strategy involves implementing specific initiatives tailored to addressing the needs of under-represented groups in higher education, as well as implementing a range of programs designed to eliminate barriers and foster participation and success.

Ongoing Equity Programs

Our current approach includes dedicated support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through our Riawunna Centre. We recognise that there are many points in the student lifecycle where there are potential barriers to student equity in higher education and we are addressing them in various ways, including: provision of early engagement in learning at primary school level through the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment (Underwood Centre); an innovative University entry model for secondary students that addresses barriers associated with the current Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) system; a significant scholarship program

to address financial barriers; the provision of pathway programs to support under-represented year-12 and adult learners so that they are better prepared for entry into undergraduate courses; support for regional study hubs to improve access for adult learners in the community that are unable to move to access education facilities in large centres; and focused support for students with disabilities and health conditions to ensure an accessible and equitable study environment for all students. The University is reinforcing the application of an equity pedagogy lens on all current Learning and Teaching strategies, as described in the next section of this Mission Compact. In addition, a university-wide Student Equity and Success Working Group has been established to oversee progress and governance of student equity agendas.

Regional Access Strategies

As the cornerstone of our regional access strategy, the HECG funding has allowed the University to continue to maintain and provide a broad curriculum at our regional campuses at the Cradle Coast and in Launceston, an amount that is over and above the student revenue that is received for teaching students in these locations.

Our focus on regions includes the west coast, north-west, northern, north-east and southern Tasmania. We note that this also includes the disadvantaged peri-urban regions in Launceston and Hobart. These regions are characterised by multiple generations of poverty with multiple intersecting causes of educational disadvantage, including Aboriginal, low SES people, rural and first in family to attend university people.

The regionality of the campuses results in smaller class sizes than larger metropolitan universities and the resulting diseconomy of scale contributes to the ongoing investment required. The nature of the student profile is also more intensive to teach in a way that enables them to reach successful completion, resulting in more teaching hours being invested per student. The requirement for staff to maintain the campuses and travel between campuses also adds to the cost of this investment in regional delivery.

While the additional costs are material, the many benefits which come from providing these regional campuses are far greater. From an economic perspective, [our response to the Accord Interim Report](#) identified modelling of the economic return and health benefits just from the additional students that obtain a degree through being able to study locally, showing the return on regional education is over three-times the value of the investment. This is before the economic benefits of having additional staff members and associated economic activity in the regions is considered. The funding is also directly improving access to education for more of the Tasmanian population, which is entirely consistent with the Interim Accord Report objectives of improving educational access and equity for those who are educationally disadvantaged. We anticipate that the HECG funding will support this investment in 2024 and beyond as a key element of our Equity Plan.

Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement

The [Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement 2021-2024](#) contributes to the acknowledgement and respect of our deep-time Aboriginal culture and history, diverse knowledges, and enduring presence. In many ways these define the University's distinctive sense of place and belonging. The Plan is essential in focusing the teaching, learning and research capability of the University of Tasmania on developing Aboriginal social, cultural, intellectual, and economic capacity in Tasmania and across Australia. Our dedicated Riawunna Centre fosters a culturally welcoming place and aspires to create positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment

The Underwood Centre conducts research, builds partnerships, and delivers programs that contribute to positive and sustained change in educational outcomes for children and young people. The Centre is a major recipient of the University's Higher Educational Participation and Partnerships Program investment each year. Programs for 2024 include the Children's University Tasmania which engages children aged between 7 to 14 with extracurricular activities that build confidence and engagement with learning. These rich learning experiences help build self-confidence and resilience and positively impact educational attainment.

Schools Recommendation Program (SRP)

The SRP has fundamentally transformed access to higher education at the University of Tasmania. The program is designed to reduce reliance on the ATAR by partnering with secondary schools. The SRP admission evaluates recommendations from teachers on observed student aptitudes that translate to success at university, rather than relying on TCE and ATAR systems.

The SRP has proven to be an equitable admission process for all year-12 students, especially those who feel university is out of reach for them. The program is now becoming firmly embedded as the main path of entry for school leavers, with 87% of Tasmanian year-12's applying through the SRP last year. Similar results are expected this year with 1769 individual applications received, an increase of 120 on last year. The SRP plays an important role in ensuring nationwide access to higher education. This year, a total of 1,759 applications were received through the SRP from a total of 715 schools from across mainland Australia. Throughout this year, we will continue to develop and improve the SRP to increase access and eliminate barriers to higher education.

Scholarships

Our [Support to Study Scholarship Package](#) aims to help students prepare and succeed in their studies. These scholarships are provided to remove financial barriers and offer assistance with relocation, accommodation, academic support, career guidance, as well as health and wellbeing support. Last year, 1,273 Scholarships were granted with 1003 acceptances. Of these, 556 were from Tasmania and the remainder were from mainland Australia. We remain committed to offering this scholarship package, tailored to address the specific challenges students face in achieving success at university. Although our scholarship programs effectively lower barriers, each year more than 1000 eligible Tasmanian students remain unable to pursue higher education for financial reasons. This is unacceptable. Prioritising the expansion of access scholarships is a key focus of our philanthropic work, making a profound difference for many students each year who are the first in their families to attend university – and even, in some cases, to finish school.

Pathway Programs

We recognise that our students' educational journeys are non-linear and we provide multiple access points to higher education, allowing students to enter and re-enter the learning pathway at different stages of their lives and careers. Our distinctive portfolio of pathway programs and courses are underpinned by student-centred approaches including Universal Design for Learning (UDL), transition pedagogy, and opportunities for negotiated learning. We offer contemporary curricula and support, anchored by a commitment to educational excellence, innovative teaching, and flexible learning opportunities including face-to face, online, part-time and accelerated options.

Regional Study Hubs

In Tasmania, high-disadvantage areas are concentrated in specific regions and suburbs. To enhance educational opportunities in these areas, a regionally networked, place-based approach is needed. Regional University Study Hubs support remote and regional Tasmanians in accessing safe, inclusive, and meaningful learning experiences. Two such study hubs currently operate in Tasmania

across Zeehan and Smithton, each staffed with Regional Learning Officers from the University who provide individual support to current and prospective students as well as to alumni living in these regions. We also actively support and deliver broader community learning activities through the Study Hubs such as Children's University, annual careers and study expos, and roadshows which highlight the research, teaching and learning work relevant to these regions. A recent initiative that was successfully delivered through the Study Hubs is the Regional Learning Pathways Project. This project supported 'non-traditional' learners to build confidence and plan a clear pathway to formal learning that supports their aspirations and meets local workforce needs.

New and Evolving Strategic Equity Priorities in 2024:

This year's HECG funding will support our strategic focus to invest in equity initiatives that aim to effectively address barriers to access, participation, retention, and completion for students from under-represented and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Priorities for 2024 are listed below, with further details to be shared in the Equity Plan:

- Regional Education Plan. The University has recently appointed a new Pro Vice-Chancellor, Launceston who has the extended remit of Executive Dean, Regional Education. Professor Natalie Brown brings a deep personal connection to our regions, a profound understanding of education in Tasmania, and a strong commitment to the University's mission. In 2024 Professor Brown will strengthen our investment in regional education through the development of our Regional Education Plan.
- Indigenous transformation. An Indigenous Commission has been established to develop a vision statement for Indigenous Transformation at the University, which will also frame the development of a new Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement.
- Strengthening pathways architecture. A redesign of our pathways architecture that removes barriers and strengthens participation of diverse student cohorts and equity groups and promotes success. This will include strengthening the position of University College within the University system.
- Curriculum reform and equity pedagogy. Developing proposals for a simplified curriculum that supports all students, but particularly equity groups, to progress through university successfully.
- Enhancing systems to enable student interventions. In 2024 we are introducing the Student Retention and Engagement Analytics Platform (StREAM) which will enable early identification of students at risk, in particular equity students. We will be exploring proposals to introduce predictive student data analytics and refinement of academic advising and supports for academic success.
- Amplifying student voice and improving student experience. We will develop proposals in 2024 to sharpen our focus on intervention to support student wellbeing, our transition pedagogy and the creation of intentional communities to strengthen a sense of belonging for equity cohorts.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

The University of Tasmania's strategic plan outlines our commitment to creating distinctive, high-quality courses and student experiences, irrespective of location. As the only university in Tasmania, our commitment to breadth and flexibility as well as campus reach is essential to ensuring we accommodate the diverse requirements of our communities and support our regional economy. In 2024, key teaching and learning performance strategies include a programmatic model for teaching quality and the development of renewed approaches to student retention and success. All strategies outlined in this section will benefit from consistent attention to the equity context in their development and delivery.

Distinctive Offerings that meet Tasmania's Needs

To meet both regional skill-needs and to create equitable opportunity, a breadth of professional courses is needed. The University of Tasmania has developed new, regionally distinctive courses that align to professional need. These courses, such as Marine and Antarctic Sciences in Hobart, Agricultural Science, Allied Health, and Food Innovation in Launceston, and Equipment Design and Technology in Burnie, leverage connection with the environment, proximity to industry and community, as well as offering field trips to unique locations and experiences that can only be found here on the island. Our distinctive curricula also include partnering with industry and other research bodies such as the Australian Antarctic Division and CSIRO which maximise the unique learning opportunities found here.

Programmatic Model for Teaching Quality

A comprehensive programmatic model for teaching quality is being delivered throughout 2024 which engages colleagues across Colleges, Schools, and Divisions. The programmatic model involves a systematic review of teaching performance, which involves the development of transformation plans for areas below the institutional standard and facilitates the sharing of best practices for areas exceeding institutional teaching standards. This approach is a natural extension of the work the University has implemented over several years on teaching quality. The key 2024 deliverable for this major priority area is the development of a Digital Plan for Learning and Teaching, with the support of a dedicated Digital Futures team. This work expands the simplification objectives we have pursued for several years, which have ensured our actions are underpinned by systems and processes that support academic relevance and excellence.

Student Retention and Success

We are developing renewed approaches to support student retention and success, applying a whole of institution redevelopment to lift achievement and have a differential impact on equity. In addition to the equity-based initiatives listed above, in 2024 we will also focus on developing:

- **Targeted communication** to students including digital communications that use data to tailor messages for individual requirements.
- **A simplified administrative system which** aims to reduce the unnecessary administration burden faced by students, particularly low SES students who often struggle to provide evidence of administrative records, financial statements and the like.

For further information about our approaches to support student retention and success please see [guide to support for students](#).

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Research Excellence and Impact for and from Tasmania

Reflecting our place-based mission, in 2024 we will continue to conduct purpose-driven and supply-informed research, serving the needs of Tasmania and making national and global contributions in areas of distinctive advantage. Our Research Model provides strategic guardrails and societal impact pathways to prioritise research that addresses Tasmania's educational, economic, health, social, cultural, and environmental challenges to maximise the community and industry benefit of our research. We have established the Tasmanian Policy Exchange (TPE) to facilitate timely and coordinated engagement between the University, Tasmanian Government, community and industry on issues central to the State's future.

The research training of our Higher Degree Research (HDR) students is embedded in the programs and projects of work prioritised via our Research Model. Throughout 2024 we will develop a new HDR framework with key priorities of renewing HDR development programs, strengthening supervisor training and mechanisms to monitor quality of supervision, and expanding opportunities for industry-linked researcher training for HDR students. We will also improve the sustainability of being an HDR student, through initiatives to deepen support for HDR student safety and wellbeing, including deep review of HDR governance and operations against the principles of inclusion, diversity and equity.

We have embedded strategic and operational key performance indicators for research reporting across the University from individual Disciplines and Schools through to University Council. Dashboards have been developed so that all staff are able to view and understand patterns in research performance across the organisation. Metrics tracked include indicators for research excellence (eg research income received, grant success rates and quality of research outputs), research impact (eg industry partnerships) and HDR performance.

During 2024 we will largely complete the replacement of our research management systems which underpin and enable our Research Model. Our research output and open-access repositories were merged last year and now benefit from technologies like auto-harvesting from external data providers ensuring our research is more widely available and helping us to understand how it is being used.

Innovation and Commercialisation

We seek to enable industry and new enterprises in areas of competitive advantage and opportunity for Tasmania, and will achieve this through an innovation ecosystem, including incubator/accelerator facilities and diverse pathways to raise finance and spinout/start-up companies. To support this endeavour, the University has established a separate commercialisation vehicle in the form of a wholly owned subsidiary company, which trades as UTAS Innovation Ventures (InVent) and aims to grow and maximise the impact of university owned intellectual property (IP).

InVent specialises in:

- IP advice and management (eg establishment of patents and other protection of IP and ongoing management of the University's patent portfolio).
- Commercial strategy and legal drafting (eg working with advisors and industry to identify the optimal path to commercial impact and provision of the necessary associated legal support).

- Research impact skill building (eg commercialisation training for selected staff and HDR students working on IP with emerging potential).
- Innovation ecosystem events (eg events to raise the profile of commercialisation activities in the University and broader Tasmanian community).
- Enterprise creation (eg licencing of IP to external entities, establishment of spin-out companies which own University IP and so on).

By way of illustrating impact from innovation, **Oxygenie** has patented algorithm technology developed by a University of Tasmania team led by Professor Peter Dargaville (Medicine) and Dr Tim Gale (Engineering). A commercial licence was granted to UK-based medical equipment manufacturer, SLE Ltd in 2018. SLE Ltd uses the technology in its neonatal ventilators to control the amount of oxygen in a baby's blood. Now in 43 countries, Oxygenie is generating royalty income to the University. Not yet in the USA and Canada, the licensee is currently exploring launching into these markets and has been working with the University on new products and pricing structures. The research team continues to innovate, with a recent related invention in the area of sleep apnoea being explored.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

As the sole university in Tasmania with a commitment to making Tasmania more prosperous, sustainable and equitable, our strategy is impact driven and focused on long-term partnerships using co-design models.

We have nationally unique collaborations with the Tasmanian government, including the Education Roundtable to improve educational attainment and the Tasmanian Collaboration for Health Improvement (partnered with the Tasmania Department of Health, Primary Health Tasmania and Health Consumers Tasmania) to facilitate the translation of our health research leading to healthier, longer and better lives for Tasmanians.

We have enduring joint venture industry partnerships focused on supporting agriculture (Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture [TIA]), and fisheries and aquaculture (Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies [IMAS]). TIA leads agricultural sustainability research projects in partnership with industry, with findings that enable the agricultural sector to adapt, implement sustainable practices and be positioned to be resilient to future challenges. To support this work, we have invested in cutting-edge research facilities in Tasmania, including establishing research farms in the North-West, and we have committed to delivering the Tasmanian Agricultural Precinct in the North. Through deep connections with industry stakeholders and Tasmanian farmers, TIA research priorities are industry-led, relevant and practical for 'on-farm' adoption of research findings.

As a research institute of excellence in temperate marine research, IMAS has partnered with industry and government to support critical research in areas such as the Maugean skate, the flathead fish and climate engagement. Alongside this, IMAS works in collaboration with the Tasmanian Government and industry to ensure Tasmania's marine resources and industries are sustainably developed and managed. Our partnership with the Tasmanian Government saw the Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration Agreement extended for a further ten years last year. Through this, IMAS delivers leading, world-class research into temperate marine and coastal

research to support the effective and sustainable management of Tasmanian marine resources and ensure the maximum benefit accrues to the Tasmanian environment, economy and its industries.

The Australian Maritime College (AMC) engages locally, nationally and globally to serve maritime needs for civil and defence applications, by working closely with the advanced manufacturing sector, which includes the development of the Defence and Maritime Innovation and Design Precinct at our Newnham campus in Launceston. Our focus on increasing industry presence at our Newnham campus includes the development of the Tasmanian Agriculture Precinct and recent establishment of Australian Forest and Wood Innovations.

Our dedicated impact-gearred entities, InVent (see above) and the Tasmanian Policy Exchange are key portals for industry, government and the community to connect and engage deeply with our academic capabilities. We have also developed a platform capability, the Tasmanian Behaviour Lab to assist our partners better understand and support their needs. This includes working with partners to co-design impact pathways for societal benefit and commercialisation (see Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation), ensuring our research programs and academic offerings are aligned with current and industry and community needs.

The University is actively involved in the National Microcredential Program, which has enabled us to collaborate closely with industry while providing pathways and access for those new to higher education at all levels. Additionally, the Wicking Dementia Research Centre has collaborated with industry on behalf of the Commonwealth to develop a suite of micro-credential learning packages to meet the needs of the aged-care sector, providing content free to the end user. Currently a new offering is in development specific to dementia respite.

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 8 May 2024

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

by

PROFESSOR RUFUS BLACK

Full name (please print)

VICE-CHANCELLOR

Position



Signature

In the presence of:

MEGHAN MUNDAY

Witness (please print)

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature