



2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Avondale 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

Avondale University was founded in 1897 with deep roots in the community and a commitment to prepare graduates with a greater vision of world needs. Over 120 years, Avondale has upheld its values of Excellence, Spirituality, Wellbeing, Integrity, and Service.

Our refreshed [Avondale Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#) highlights these values and our ongoing commitment to goals and targets for growth in areas that align with current national and sector priorities as a Table B provider. These areas include:

1. Delivering an exceptional student experience (*Ensuring student and staff safety*)

As a faith-based institution, Avondale University has always sought to maintain a high standard of quality, professionalism, transparency, equity, and personalised support for the wellbeing and safety of students and staff. Our measurements for success include continued high (Top 10 in Australia) student satisfaction measures (QILT), improved student retention rates, and positive indicators of satisfaction with student support services. Success for 2024-2027 will mean:

- Continuing to be in the Top 10 in Australia for high quality student experience
- Enhanced spiritual engagement assessed using qualitative and quantitative measures
- Improved student satisfaction with wellbeing and support services
- Improved student satisfaction, retention and success in undergraduate and postgraduate courses

Relevant documents:

[Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination Prevention Policy](#)

[Support for Students Policy and Procedure](#)

[Sexual Misconduct & Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

2. Securing our future (*Student success*)

Avondale is committed to growth in student numbers over the coming years to enhance local regional HE participation rates while contributing to labour market shortfalls in teaching and nursing nationally. This priority will be addressed through a combination of business plan renewal, diversifying revenue sources, innovating in coursework offerings and modes of delivery that meet market demand and expanding VET pathway options. Investing to grow is a priority of the renewal plan, particularly in digital renewal and investment in contemporary learning and worship spaces and improved student accommodation to enhance Avondale's ability to attract students to on campus and online learning environments. Success in this area will mean:

- Increased higher education student enrolments in current and newly created courses and modes of delivery across all Fields of Education to meet market demand
- Increased VET and short course student enrolments in current and expanded course offerings in priority labour market areas
- Financial sustainability will be measured through increased operating income, diversified revenue streams and reduced operating deficits

The [2024 Year in Review](#) highlights the success and challenges of our plans and our ongoing commitment to growth in numbers, strategy and revenue.

3. World-class research engagement with impact (Academic Freedom)

Our learning and teaching is enriched by scholarship and world-class, mission-aligned research. Avondale specialises in applied research that: aligns with our core mission, has a demonstrable impact on communities, addresses real world issues and challenges, and serves our world for good. Avondale already demonstrates 'world-standard' research based on overall quality and quantity of research publications, number of citations, research grant income, collaboration with peers internationally and industry engagement (including with Adventist Schools Australia, Sanitarium Health & Wellbeing Group, ADRA and Advent Health). It will be important to sustain and increase the consistency of this performance across all Fields of Research and Education over the coming period. Success in our research will mean:

- Annual growth in research quality and productivity through increased submission to high quality (Q1/ Q2) journals and improved field-weighted citation impact scores
- Annual growth in research grant, commercialisation and contract income across Fields of Education
- Strategic partnerships growth, prioritising evidence of impact and expanded partnerships with Adventist institutions in the South Pacific region

Relevant documents:

[Research and HDR Policies](#)

[Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy](#)

4. Staff talent and culture (Workforce and skill needs)

Our people are the bedrock of our strategic success. Our workforce plan focuses on fostering staff talent, capability building and wellbeing. We are intentional about shaping and refreshing our academic and professional staff workforce profile to align with strategic priorities, educational and research focus areas. Opportunities for spiritual engagement and practical wellbeing support are integral to fostering our organisational culture. Success in this area will mean:

- Annual improvements in staff wellbeing and spiritual engagement using survey and qualitative indicators
- Continued top quartile performance on benchmarked staff engagement, learning and culture surveys
- Increased senior academic leader ratio by Field of Education

5. Operational efficiency and excellence (Countering foreign interference and cyber and data security)

A systemic program is underway to enhance data management and automation, improve monitoring of student progress and identification of students at risk, and to counter threats to academic integrity and cyber security. These efforts include investment in systems, research, and education. Avondale benchmarks nationally to maximise cyber risk mitigation, counter foreign interference risks and optimise data security. Operational efficiency measures are monitored closely to maximise financial sustainability and risk mitigation. Success will mean:

- Improved resource use, particularly space utilization across the calendar year
- Growth in external event income
- Operational efficiencies through automation and streamlined digitally enabled workflows

Relevant documents:

[Data Protection and Information Security Policy](#)

[Foreign Interference Policy](#)

[Generative Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Policy](#)

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

Avondale University continues to refine the timeliness and accuracy of our 'Students at Risk' monitoring and intervention tools and procedures. The student at risk tracking system focuses on metrics that facilitate early identification and intervention and tracks the provision of support services including those specific to equity groups. A new position, 'Student Success Coordinator', has been established to maintain and coordinate the system across the range of student support services, as well as to case manage those students most in need of regular, personalised support.

The effectiveness of this system is measured through the comparison of disaggregated student retention and attrition figures with historical data as well as the QILT student satisfaction survey and internal student surveys. Qualitative data is also gathered through informal feedback provided by individual students. An emphasis is placed on ensuring that equity group retention is found to be comparable or better than the wider student cohort.

Oversight of the implementation and reporting of the recently updated [Support for Students Policy and Procedure](#) is the responsibility of the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic. Senior DVCA staff will identify and monitor student needs and barriers to access, including those specific to equity groups, and work with the University's support providers to match these with appropriate support services. This includes improvements to existing support services as well as recommending new student support initiatives. The Academic Quality Office will continue to revise relevant policies and procedures, research relevant industry best practice, and work with key stakeholders to implement learnings.

Both the Student Management (SMS) and Learning Management systems (LMS) will be upgraded in 2026 and 2027. Procedures relating to the communication of support service information, referrals, and tracking and monitoring the delivery of support services are being revised to take advantages of new functionality in the SMS and LMS. A training of the trainers approach will ensure that all relevant staff are able to make full use of the capabilities of the new platforms to improve support service delivery.

Avondale is a recipient of the HECG in 2024 & 2025 and is implementing a four-year equity plan to substantially increase student support and community outreach for the identified equity groups. Key initiatives include:

- Establishing a student success coordinator role and learning support officer role.
- Expanding the learning advisor tutoring program with additional literacy and numeracy support.
- Expanding disability support including assistive technology for both on campus and distance students.
- Providing hardship grants and accommodation subsidies, as well as other cost-of-living and financial support initiatives.
- Introducing a peer assisted study program.
- Expanding staff training programs in cross cultural communication and teaching, with a focus on Indigenous cultures.
- Providing additional equity scholarships.
- Introducing a new subsidised universities pathways program, equivalent to enabling-funded programs; Avondale does not currently receive enabling funding.

The specific details of the initiatives selected, including key targets, timeframes, and progress to date are included in the Avondale University 2024-2025 HECG Equity Plan and Outcomes Report.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

The [Avondale University Learning and Teaching Plan](#) provides a blueprint for learning and teaching improvement and enhancement. It specifies key metrics across the areas of curriculum renewal, quality enhancement and assurance, and wellbeing, sustainability, and community engagement. Avondale takes seriously its responsibility to design, deliver and evaluate teaching and learning experiences that are engaging and underpinned by benchmarked quality indicators. Avondale has a sustained track record of the highest level of performance in QILT surveys of quality of teaching and the student experience compared to peer higher education providers and universities. Nevertheless, we maximise opportunities for improvement, particularly in relation to enhancing student retention, learning outcome success, and work-integrated and service learning across courses.

A longstanding commitment to holistic, personalised learning in a faith-based environment forms the core of our learning and teaching approach. Innovative curriculum design, evidence-based practices and values-driven approaches to student engagement are hallmarks of Avondale's good practices in teaching and learning. In 2025-2026 we have invested in additional roles to improve early intervention and support at-risk students. We continue to implement policies and initiatives to address the unique needs of students with disabilities and those from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly in online and blended learning settings. [The National Centre for Cultural Competency](#) has provided informative in-service opportunities for our staff.

Avondale's Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning ([CASTL](#)) leads the 'Student Success' workshop series and good practice roundtables to advance staff knowledge in learning and teaching including assessment design and feedback. In 2025-2026 we have prioritised professional learning workshops for staff to support them working with increasingly diverse learner cohorts and international students.

Avondale actively promotes scholarly activities of staff to foster a research-informed approach to holistic curriculum innovation. This is evidenced by the allocation of time and participation of all permanent academic staff in scholarship activities (up to 100 hours per year). Improvements in teaching, curriculum, and assessment are monitored through annual course/unit reviews, monitoring of annual course reports, course advisory committees and required unit self-reviews. Casual staff are included in course and unit-level team meetings to ensure holistic approaches to teaching and learning improvement.

The Avondale University community is characterised by close collaborative work between academic and professional staff, lecturers and support service providers. The University's wellbeing focus prioritises integration of student support service information and subject/course curriculum design. Where possible, all academic support services are available in person and online, including the University's investment in Studiosity to enable 24/7 access to learning support services. Outcome measures include student retention, student engagement with support services, and responses to Avondale's Student Academic Evaluation Questionnaire, all measured against historic baselines.

In response to the emergence and rapidly evolving use of generative artificial intelligence, Avondale University continues to progress its Generative AI Action Plan and embed strategies to utilise educative opportunities and mitigate the risks that such technologies may pose to researching, teaching and the assurance of learning.

Avondale University acknowledges and utilises the work of the Australasian Academic Integrity Network ([AAIN](#)) and TEQSA's good practice guidelines and most recent resource [Enacting assessment reform in a time of artificial intelligence](#), that support a collaborative response to 'new and emerging threats to academic integrity'.

One of the key strategies driving innovation and the two-lane approach to assessment at Avondale University is a proactive professional development program led by CASTL where high profile sector

experts such [Professor Margaret Bearman](#), [Professor Danny Liu](#) and [Professor Phillip Dawson](#) have contributed to the education and training of our staff.

Avondale University Research is characterised by its longstanding focus on applied, interdisciplinary research that aligns with course offerings in three Broad Fields of Education (06, 07, 09). As part of Avondale's application for university status in 2021, the **Avondale University 5-year Research Transition Plan, 2021-2026**, was developed. This plan will be revised in 2025-2026. Avondale will be assessed on interim research performance in 2026 as part of the 5- and 10-year transition to world-standard research performance consistent with the HESF Provider Category Standards.

Research improvement strategies will continue to focus on:

- a. a workforce plan for attracting and retaining research-active and/or research-focused academic staff – from early career to professor level – aligned with research focus areas and prioritised research programs;
- b. multidisciplinary research programs, partnerships and resources to maximise the quality of project outcomes;
- c. investing in expertise to benchmark current research outputs and advise on strategies for achieving world-standard research outcomes and publications (in terms of high quality and quantity) across BFOEs; and
- d. investment in research management systems and research culture.

Strategies to improve researcher capability and research capacity include:

- research-focused roles;
- workload models that prioritise research;
- revision of research-related policies to include capacity-building strategies;
- funding to incentivise research seed grants through the University's Research Centres; and
- training programs to increase competitive grant funding success.

Strategies for improving research training

Avondale has a longstanding commitment to supporting and improving research training. The **Research Training Support Framework**, developed in 2014/2015, was updated, reviewed and extended in 2024 to provide a nationally benchmarked framework for research training activities.

The Research Training Program comprises activities for researchers, including HDR supervisors and HDR candidates. Online resources have been developed to improve research practices, HDR supervisor training and HDR candidate support. These include the Avondale HDR Hub (a dynamic online resource for HDR candidates), and The Supervisor's Little Helper and The Researcher's Little Helper. Outcomes are evaluated through candidate feedback, staff feedback, and external examiner reports. From 2026, an online Research Integrity Module will replace more informal training workshops and will be compulsory for all Avondale researchers, including HDR candidates and supervisors.

Priorities for improving innovation

A substantial portion of Avondale's research is conducted in collaboration with the school, healthcare, church, and manufacturing industries, which fund various research projects. These collaborations drive innovation priorities. Priorities include improving sector knowledge and operations in schools, hospitals, welfare agencies, and church administration across the South Pacific region. Innovation examples include succession planning in schools, faith engagement in schools, dealing with post-COVID education, and discovering how different sections of a worldwide church relate to its mission in diverse global communities

Externally funded research projects, including NHMRC projects, in the areas of lifestyle medicine, wellbeing, and infection prevention and control, prioritise innovation in response to social and public health challenges. Innovation improvements are fostered through ongoing collaborations with industry partners and advisory groups, as well as expanded exposure to research and research management within the university sector.

Avondale adopts several strategies for engaging with industry and commercialising our research. The applied and multidisciplinary nature of our research focus areas and projects means that industry engagement is a particular strength on which we aim to build. Avondale's church-related industry stakeholders include hospitals, schools, aged care facilities, churches, and health food production companies. We also seek opportunities to expand these networks beyond the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as there are numerous transferable outcomes in areas such as healthcare, lifestyle medicine, business and education. Staff prioritise consultative processes for assessing stakeholder interests and needs as part of the industry engagement process. Alignment with the university's mission and values is equally important.

For example, following a Comprehensive Course Review for the Bachelor of Arts, the School of Arts and Business are in the process of developing a new placement unit in the Arts for students studying Majors in areas such as Communications, English, Modern History, Art, and Music (among others). This new unit will strengthen industry ties but also allow for industry input and feedback into the Bachelor of Arts program, equipping students with industry mentors and industry informed skillsets.

Avondale prioritises courses and research that has the potential to solve real-world problems, build long-term relationships, and positively impact our communities across the South Pacific region and internationally. We also recognise the importance of developing ideas that have the potential for commercialisation or widespread translation, as summarised in our [Annual Research Reports](#).

Connections with industry are both national and international. A case study of this is Avondale's industry engagement in health (06) and wellbeing. An evidence-based lifestyle and wellbeing program has been developed in our Lifestyle Medicine and Health Research Centre and has been adopted by schools, universities, and government entities, both nationally and internationally. Professor Brett Mitchell AM recently received Australia Day Honours for his work in infection control. He and his research teams have extensive industry collaborations, for example:

- Central Coast Local Health District (<https://cleenstudy.com/>)
- Hunter Medical Research Institute (<https://hmri.org.au/research/infection-research-program>)
- Royal Melbourne hospital
- Sydney Adventist Hospital (<https://happenstudy.com/>)
- Cabrini Health
- Bushlands Health (aged care)
- GAMA Healthcare Australia ([Avondale University and GAMA Healthcare Partner to Advance Infection Prevention Research - Avondale University](#)) (research contract)
- MEZRIT (research contract) ([Resources — Mezrit](#))
- TimerTag Pty Ltd
- NSW Clinical Excellence Commission
- Australasian College of Infection Prevention and Control
- Australian College of Nursing
- Sigma Nursing

Avondale's work in education is closely connected to Adventist Schools Australia and other schools in Australia and New Zealand and partner tertiary institutions in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands. Research conducted on behalf of the church stakeholders is both national and international as illustrated below:

National	International
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Family Ministries • Adventist Development and Relief Agency Australia • Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Ministry • New South Wales War Memorial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Archives Statistics and Research, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists • Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists • Mission Institute, Andrews University • Adventist Human Studies Research Association • New Zealand Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. • Mana Pacific Consultants Limited, New Zealand • New Zealand Ministry of Business Innovation and Enterprise

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
by

Jessica Mohr

Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary

Position

of the Department of Education

Signature

01/12/2025

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of
AVONDALE UNIVERSITY LTD

by

Malcolm Coulson

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor

Position

Signature

In the presence of:

Rachel Searl

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

In the presence of:

Stephanie Lockton

Witness (please print)

Executive Assistant

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature