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

Macquarie University is a university of service, engagement, and empowerment. We serve our students, staff, and communities, working with partners to lift productivity, build skills, and improve living standards through the transformative impact of education. Our mission aligns with Australia's priorities in workforce development, research translation, and a better and fairer education system that supports a stronger economy.

Macquarie's vision is to be a transformative power, known for the quality of our education and the experience of our students, and for research and healthcare that delivers solutions to national and global challenges. Macquarie aims to be a destination of choice for students, an employer of choice for staff, a provider of choice for healthcare, a nexus for partnership and innovation, and more deeply aligned with First Nations peoples.

Our University: A Framing of Dynamic Futures is the University's strategic framework and sets the long-term priorities. The **University Operating Plan 2025–2030** provides the bridge between the long-term strategic framework and the three core mission strategies as set out below, ensuring day-to-day delivery aligns with the University's long-term vision.

Implementation is guided by principles of adaptability, alignment, and outcomes-focus, with an integrated institutional performance scorecard tracking Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across two-time horizons: immediate (2025–2026) and medium-term (2027–2030) priorities.

Three Core Mission Strategies

1. **Education**: through The Macquarie Advantage strategy, the University will deliver quality teaching, strong student experience, industry-aligned programs in priority fields that improve graduate outcomes and strengthen Australia's skills pipeline in health, education, cyber security, and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, safe and inclusive learning environments, and a connected digital and physical campus.

2. **Research**: guided by Research Strategy 2035: World-leading Research; World-changing Impact, the University will accelerate research performance, develop the next generation of researchers, strengthen collaboration and deliver research that addresses national and global challenges.

3. **Health**: through Heal. Learn. Discover. MQ Health Strategic Plan 2022–2026, the University will integrate education, research, and clinical care to improve health outcomes.

Macquarie's approach to **national and sector priorities** includes:

- Contributing to Australia's workforce and skills needs through programs in health, education, engineering, cyber security, and other high-demand areas, including the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Student Pathways Program

- Continuing investment in cyber and data security. Macquarie is also founding partner of the **Institute of Applied Technology Digital (IAT-Digital)** a flagship example of industry-driven, skills-focused education

- Maintaining a proactive approach to student and staff safety through policy, induction, and support services

- Sustaining strong governance to counter foreign interference, led by senior executive oversight and close engagement with Commonwealth agencies

- Upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom under policies aligned with the national Model Code, reinforced in induction and governance processes

- Advancing sustainability, inclusion, and reconciliation with First Nations peoples, and building partnerships that support national priorities and address global challenges.

Macquarie University is focused on meeting the needs of significant population growth in our local region, particularly in North Ryde and Macquarie Park, where rapid residential development and new schools are driving demand for teachers, health professionals, and higher-education places.

This integration of the Strategic Framework, the Operating Plan, and the Mission Strategies ensures that teaching, research, and healthcare are supported by the right capabilities and resources. It also positions the University to align with evolving national policy directions and to address future workforce, equity, and participation needs.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

Equity is embedded in *The Macquarie Advantage*, Macquarie University's education strategy, and drives our commitment to widening participation and success in higher education. Through this strategy the University focuses on improving access, retention, and completion for students from under-represented backgrounds, including First Nations peoples, students from low socio-economic status communities, those from regional and remote areas, and students with disability.

Alongside these priorities, the University also provides tailored support for international students, recognising their significant contribution to our community and the unique barriers they face. Guided by institution-wide strategies, the University combines targeted financial assistance, culturally safe pathways, regional partnerships, and digital innovation to remove barriers and enable every student to thrive.

Strategic Framework

Macquarie's approach is guided by:

- *Macquarie University Indigenous Strategy 2026–2030* (building on Indigenous Strategy 2016–2025)

- *Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Framework 2024–2028*

- *Support for Students Policy* and *Student Cohort Monitoring Procedure*

- Disability support services and *Widening Participation* initiatives

These frameworks ensure equity is embedded in institutional planning, delivery, and accountability.

Key Priorities and Initiatives

1. Scholarships and Financial Assistance

Macquarie University reduces financial barriers through:

- *Coursework Scholarship Framework:* transparent, equitable governance of all awards

- *Targeted equity scholarships:* 30 scholarships supporting nearly 400 students in 2025

- *Indigenous Scholarship Strategy:* combining financial, cultural, and academic support

- *Accommodation and relocation bursaries:* easing hardship for regional and remote students.

2. First Nations peoples Access and Success

Macquarie University expands First Nations peoples' participation, retention, and success via:

- *Pathway programs:* culturally safe entry routes across all levels of study

- *Walanga Muru:* a hub for academic support, cultural identity, and community connection

- *Mudang-Dali Connected Curriculum:* embedding First Nations perspectives into discipline learning.

3. Regional and Community Partnerships

Macquarie University strengthens engagement and aspiration through:

- *Widening Participation Outreach:* nascent and emerging relationships with key stakeholders including TAFE Broken Hill, NSW Country Universities Centre Far West, and NSW Regional Development Australia Far West
- *Health education pathways:* partnerships with, among others, Far West Local Health District and Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Corporation to create routes into health careers
- *The Bush Uni:* Wuyagiba and Gaarthalala Study Hubs educate remote First Nations leaders of tomorrow.

4. **Equity of Access and Inclusive Learning**

Macquarie University broadens participation by:
- *Entry pathways:* UniReady enabling program, early entry schemes, Macquarie University College programs, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Entry Pathway (ATSIEP)
- *Digital transformation:* redesigning processes and using advanced analytics to identify and support students at risk earlier
- *International student support:* transition programs, advisory services, and language development initiatives to strengthen belonging and academic success.

Measuring Impact

The University tracks access, retention, progression, and completion for all equity cohorts, benchmarked against national data. Results are disaggregated to highlight performance gaps and inform targeted interventions. Performance is reported regularly to Council, the Executive Group, and Academic Senate, embedding accountability and continuous improvement across the University.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

Macquarie University is committed to strengthening teaching quality and student success. The University draws on the outcomes of the *Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) Student Experience Survey (SES)* and *Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS),* together with wider drivers such as technology, workforce demand, and student expectations, to shape its education strategy, *The Macquarie Advantage*. Macquarie's priorities centre on curriculum and assessment reform, proactive student support, and digitally enabled learning environments. Together, these strategies respond directly to student feedback, lift teaching quality, and improve retention, completion, and graduate outcomes.

1. **Student Support and Wellbeing**

Macquarie University is embedding proactive, whole-of-institution support to help students thrive:

- *Integrated wellbeing model:* expanded services, digital tools, and targeted interventions
- *Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan:* measures aligned with the new National Code to ensure a safe, respectful environment
- *Early identification and support:* predictive analytics and targeted outreach for at-risk students, including those with >50% fail rates
- *International student support:* tailored academic transition programs, language development, dedicated advisory services, and peer networks to strengthen belonging, improve outcomes, and address the unique challenges faced by international cohorts.

2. **Academic Excellence**

Macquarie University is reshaping curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy to improve teaching quality:

- *Curriculum architecture:* a common first year, curated majors aligned with workforce demand, and streamlined double degrees
- *Assessment redesign:* reducing assessment load, limiting exams (except where required), and embedding programmatic assessment
- *AI in assessment:* a two-lane approach: AI-enabled assessments to prepare graduates for future workplaces, and safeguarded assessments to ensure core capability and integrity, supported by a University-wide innovation fund
- *The Macquarie Academy:* professional development, pedagogical innovation, and "Advance HE recognition" to uplift teaching quality
- *Future Ready Program:* ~250 interdisciplinary, real-world projects embedded in every undergraduate degree from 2026 to strengthen employability.

3. **Educational Environments**

Macquarie University is creating student-centred, digitally enabled environments that enhance teaching and engagement:

- *Next Generation Digital Learning* – a connected ecosystem supporting pedagogical innovation

- *Student 360 Program* – integrated data and services for coordinated, personalised support across the student lifecycle

- *AI tools for learning and support* – 24/7 writing feedback, the AI "Virtual Peer" for academic and administrative support, and a forthcoming AI assistant for staff.

Measuring Impact

Teaching quality and student success are tracked systematically through QILT (SES and GOS), progression, retention, and completion metrics, benchmarked against national data. Results are disaggregated to identify performance gaps and inform early interventions. Performance is reported to Council, the Executive Group, and Academic Senate, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Macquarie University will deliver research strategies in support of our key research objectives: accelerating world-leading research performance, preparing world-ready graduate research candidates, engaging as a collaborator of choice, and producing research with impact.

Research Strategy 2025 -2035 and its associated KPIs launched in early 2025 and provides a clear, enduring strategic direction without constraining the creative and dynamic nature of cutting-edge research, innovation, and impact in our ever-changing world.

Macquarie's 10 Research Centres offer strength at scale, strong team leadership, excellence, competitive advantage, strategic value, new external opportunities, and collaboration to solve real-world problems.

Macquarie's ecosystem for advancing research quality and keeping performance at world-class levels draws on a mix of internal and external quality assurance and reporting mechanisms:
- Governance, reporting and accountability structures (Academic Senate Rules, Academic Senate Research Committee, Research Degree Subcommittee, Faculty Board)
- Institutional research strategies (including our new *Research Strategy 2035*)
- University policies (including our Research Quality Assurance Policy, Macquarie University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, and a suite of Graduate Research policies covering admission, supervision and examination)
- Qualifications, experience and skills of staff and supervisors (Academic Promotion Policy and mandatory supervisory training)
- External and internal quality assurance (including internal and external competitive peer review of grants, publications, internal mentoring of research activities, ethics review of research projects, and research reporting), and
- Research data capabilities and insights that inform actions, practices and policies that support individual researchers, collectives, disciplines, departments/schools, and Faculties across the University.

Macquarie University delivers sector-leading graduate research training experiences and skill development programs through:
- Enhanced opportunities for internships and innovative industry-linked graduate research programs. This includes the launch of an Entrepreneurial PhD stream, which will equip graduates with the training, skills and practical experience needed to commercialise the outcomes of their PhD research, either through licensing agreements or the creation of a start-up company.
- Embedding of our Graduate Researcher Development Framework, a four-domain, 30-competency skills taxonomy, and integrating the Graduate Researcher Development Program (GRDP). This enables students to recognise the key capabilities valued in both academic and non-academic careers to better appreciate, develop and articulate these to potential employers. We will track growth in student engagement with the GRDP, which currently averages 1,147 activities each month
- Implementation of our Global Research Training Strategy, which focuses resources on high-quality international partnerships to prepare world-ready graduate researchers through diverse academic environments and collaborative supervision across multiple institutions, and
- Implementation of a distinctive stackable research degree structure in 2025, comprising the Graduate Diploma of Research, Master of Research (MRes), and PhD pathway, which

allows students to progress through incremental levels of research training rather than committing directly to a PhD program.

Macquarie's Research, Innovation and Enterprise team provides support for research entrepreneurship and spin-out companies. 2024 successes include:
- 60 IP innovation disclosures (up from 53 in prior two years);
- seven spin-out companies (compared to three in 2023) with a 2025 pipeline of an additional 10;
- equity holdings in spin-out companies have increased by 45%, from $6.166m to $8.915m (2023 to 2024). The University is focussed on continuing this success in 2025-2026.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

Macquarie University's Research, Innovation and Enterprise team was established to build a profile with external partners as a sought-after collaborator, to provide easier navigation points for external research partners, support researchers in their efforts to form meaningful research collaborations with industry, government and the community, and facilitate the commercialisation and real-world adoption by end-users of knowledge and Intellectual Property arising from our research programs.

In 2025 - 2026, Macquarie's key priorities for engaging with industry will be to:

- Enhance strategic partnerships with industry partners such as Cochlear, ADI, Tata, Fujitsu, Optus, NextSense, NSW Government, Snowy Hydro, Celosia, DFCRC, Rozetta, Sydney FC and Google
- Continue to incubate Macquarie and community start-ups (with >150 companies supported since 2017), including through the provision of tailored training programs for researchers seeking to engage with industry and/or realise the impact of their research
- Develop dedicated Physical Containment Level 2 (PC2) facilities for deep tech incubation to support innovators in biotech through the 'valley of death'
- Increase its involvement, as either a lead or node organisation, in several Collaborative Research Centres (CRCs) and other industry programs such as those through Australia's Economic Accelerator, the Australian Research Council and the Medical Research Future Fund – Macquarie is a participant in all three short-listed CRC bids from the 2025 round, and is involved in many of the proposals under development for the 2026 round
- Explore the creation of additional internal granting or investment schemes to support new industry relationships and new company creation
- Refine policies related to researcher entrepreneurship and university research costing processes to provide an even better support structure for industry engagement and translation
- Build a Partner360 CRM system to provide a holistic view of Macquarie's partnerships with third-party entities, professionalise its approach to partnering, and render the institution a preferred partner for industry and other collaborators
- Operate a corporate engagement community of practice and key account management approach to building relationships with the highest priority partners
- Continue to strengthen relationships with industry partners in the adjacent Macquarie Park Innovation District and strengthen its standing as Australia's original and most economically significant innovation district.

The Graduate Research Academy (GRA) is leading Macquarie's engagement with industry. In 2025–2026, the GRA will build on Macquarie's early success in competitive co-funded schemes, including the National Industry PhD Program, CSIRO Industry PhD Programs, and CSIRO Next Generation Graduates Program, to strengthen Macquarie's relationships with participating industries and provide graduate research students with valuable industry experience. Since 2023, the University has seen a 49% increase in the number of graduate research students supported by industry-funded scholarships and a 103% growth in the value of these scholarships.

Macquarie will support graduate research students wishing to undertake an industry internship with access to an industry-ready bootcamp program, internship leave, amended candidature load to account for the time on the internship, top-up scholarships and other forms of funding, and additional training in areas such as partnerships, commercialisation, career management and

pitching. The University will track student engagement in industry internships and other training and development opportunities.

SIGNED for and on behalf of

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by

Jessica Mohr
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Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary
_____

Position

of the Department of Education

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Signature

01/12/2025
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Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

by

Professor S Bruce Dowton MD
_____

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor and President
_____
Position

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Signature

In the presence of:

Rachel Searl
_____

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer
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Position or profession of witness (please print)

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Signature

In the presence of:

Joanne L Overall
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Witness (please print)

Executive Assistant
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Position or profession of witness (please print)

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Signature