



2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and University of Notre Dame Australia

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 of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) provides university education within a context of Catholic faith and values, maintaining excellence in teaching, scholarship, research, professional training, and pastoral care. UNDA's current Strategic Plan progresses strongly across its five pillars. The next strategic plan, commencing January 2027, will guide transformation in higher education while remaining grounded in Catholic mission and founding values.

UNDA's strategic approach advances multiple Government priorities; aligning with the Accord, including achieving 80% workforce tertiary qualification by 2050. Our Catholic mission facilitates authentic community engagement through Catholic networks and partnerships. Our commitment to flexible, multimodal delivery directly aligns with Government's Needs Based Funding initiative and the expanded demand-driven system for disadvantaged students launching in 2027. Our FFUR programs (through Tertiary Pathway and UniPath initiatives), together with our Experience-Based Entry model position UNDA to impact.

We recognise national workforce needs, including Health Sciences (nursing, allied health, and physiotherapy) and Education (particularly early childhood and primary education). UNDA is committed to national needs with a combination of mission-driven, workforce-relevant programs, flexible delivery, and service to new cohorts including expansion of teacher education, Medicine (e.g. our remote Kimberley Centre for Remote Medical Training), and five new health-related programs

All members of our community have the right to feel safe and secure, and be treated with respect and dignity at all times. We condemn harassment, violence and unjust discrimination of every kind, and asserts that no one should be subject to physical or verbal harassment or abuse. UNDA is implementing its response to the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence, and WGEA Gender Equality Indicators, taking a coordinated approach to meeting our obligations.

UNDA's approach to managing the threat of foreign interference aligns with the *Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector* (UFIT Guidelines). A working group with representation from across UNDA provides oversight for ongoing implementation. This includes monitoring documented risk controls, treatment actions and reporting to our Audit and Risk Committee. Foreign interference risk identification and mitigation is further integrated into our policies and processes for managing conflict of interest, research funding and agreements, and third-party program delivery. All proposed research or educational collaborative arrangements involving international partners are assessed to identify arrangements that require notification under the Foreign Arrangements Scheme. UNDA's current research focus and international interactions do not include high risk activities (such as critical technologies) or involve countries that present a high risk of foreign interference.

UNDA continues to transform its technology and cyber landscape; balancing cost, a contemporary digital environment, and student experience. We will continue modernising our data environment to deliver trusted, timely, and connected data. The benefits are a unified platform, improved governance and security, faster delivery, better insights, and lower operational risk. This will further enable our data security and deliver enhanced insights and improve student experience.

The principles of academic freedom (recognised in UNDA's [Statement: Academic Freedom](#) and [Policy: Protecting Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech](#)) and freedom of speech are fundamental to our mission and culture. We are committed to the search for truth, the principle of the common good, and the pursuit of knowledge are informed by the community, faith, tradition and teaching authority of the Catholic Church. This is a cornerstone for our community. We encourage the right to pursue critical and open inquiry and to discuss freely, teach, assess, develop curricula, publish and research. Our educational programs reflect our commitment to the Catholic intellectual tradition and incorporate relevant material derived from centuries of Catholic academic thinking.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

UNDA's current [Strategic Plan](#) commits to annual increases in enrolment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (15% p.a.), students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (5% p.a.), and students from regional and remote areas (1% p.a.). Our next strategic plan will build upon these and be more inclusive of opportunity for students with challenged ability. UNDA is committed to enhancing education pathways for underrepresented cohorts, improving student retention and success, increasing graduating numbers from these groups, and engaging marginalised communities. These commitments will be refined through the next Strategic Planning process.

We welcome students of all or no faith. Widening participation is essential to UNDA's mission and aligns with our pillars of Universality, Education for the Common Good, and Integral Human Development. Given the Accord's focus on significantly increasing equity participation, UNDA is investing in transformative, large-scale approaches that create lasting impact on student experiences. UNDA responds to ATEC's intent to increase participation dramatically over the next five years through greater engagement of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds and underserved communities.

The Greater Western Sydney region and Kimberley continue to present opportunities to demonstrate alignment with Government priorities. Our Broome campus, and presence in Liverpool, Oran Park and Auburn provide further opportunity to target new students, aspirational and growing Catholic and migrant populations. This aligns with UNDA's mission to serve and impact, and aligns to achieving the Accord's goal of 80% workforce tertiary qualification by 2050. We are committed to serving the professions, viewing education as a primary mechanism to address socio-economic inequalities, enhance individual lives, and build community and national resilience.

The Indigenous Education Office has maintained steady enrolment numbers, with close to 300 Indigenous students engaged across VET and Undergraduate programs, reflecting strong retention and access outcomes. Student support services have been streamlined and integrated to ensure Indigenous student success across our environment. We have transitioned 2025 funding under ISSP and AFB grants, and are well-positioned for successful outcomes in 2026, ensuring continuity and growth of key programs. Future focus includes expanding VET program delivery at the Broome campus, with plans to create new roles to support increased participation.

Pathway programs are offered at Sydney, Fremantle, and Broome campuses, catering to diverse populations including secondary school students, school leavers, international students, mature-age learners, and those from underrepresented backgrounds. These face-to-face programs develop academic skills, discipline-related content, academic literacies, understanding of university expectations, study skills, and support-seeking behaviours. Enabling programs provide valuable stepping-stones for those requiring additional preparation to meet entry requirements, particularly benefiting underrepresented cohorts and students entering through non-ATAR pathways.

UNDA anticipates more students in outer suburbs, rural, regional, and remote areas will seek access to pathways. Our success stems from strong engagement with high school students and a holistic approach addressing non-academic needs including career advice, financial support, employment assistance, timetabling, and accommodation support. UNDA is piloting an Experience-Based Entry program to diversify student entry pathways in response to declining ATAR participation (18% decline in WA between 2018–2022). This initiative offers a more inclusive admissions model.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

Our vision is a university where equitable practice is embedded, diversity is celebrated, and students from all backgrounds – particularly those traditionally underrepresented in higher education – are welcomed and empowered to flourish. Our success in Skills Development and Peer Engagement must now be matched with improvements to QILT SES outcomes and Teaching Quality metrics.

UNDA's Digital Learning and Teaching enhancement planning is to establish a mission-driven roadmap to strengthen teaching quality, enhance the student experience, and build a future-ready digital ecosystem reflecting our Catholic identity and commitment to holistic formation. It will position technology as serving people; enriching relationships, pastoral care, rather than replacing people. It unifies systems, pedagogy, and capability development to deliver an accessible, seamless, and values-aligned learning environment. Key initiatives include the activation of Blackboard Ultra as an enhanced and more engaging LMS platform across all programs by 2026, ensuring every course meets Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards; and professional development enabling at least 75% of staff to complete customised digital pedagogy training, aligned with the Core Ecosystem, by 2027.

The Plan directly improves the student experience through consistency, accessibility, and inclusion, delivering a single, intuitive entry point to digital learning, a 10% increase in student satisfaction in inclusivity metrics, and targeting top 10 national rankings for educational experience. It enhances teaching quality through professional learning, peer-support networks, and innovation hubs that foster evidence-based digital pedagogy and AI-ready practice.

We are seeking to achieve 20% of academic staff with Advance HE Fellowships. The Fellowship will be given to staff that are exemplars in innovative curriculum design and effective student learning, utilising teaching, learning and assessment practices from our enhanced LMS. We are reviewing the Grad Cert in L&T in HE to ensure enrolment and completion growth; linking it to AdvanceHe Fellowship

Through our Student Equity & Diversity Strategy, activities are designed to achieve measurable outcomes, drawing on the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework. Actions to enhance teaching quality include:

- Embedding Universal Design for Learning across curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy.
- Providing targeted professional development and resources to build staff confidence and capability in inclusive teaching for diverse cohorts and awareness of support services.
- Developing and evaluating high-quality flexible and hybrid delivery modes, student-centred timetabling, and automatic extension policies that enable students to balance study and life.
- Diversifying assessment methods to recognise students' varied strengths.
- Improving hybrid teaching and use of assistive technology to enhance digital accessibility.
- Engaging students as partners through reference groups and sector benchmarking to inform teaching and learning practices.
- Integrating insights from contemporary research into our teaching and learning practices.

UNDA is expanding initiatives to identify and support at-risk students, including expanding pre-census engagement with learning activities through proactive nudge and communication campaigns, and a Success Plan intervention targeted at students identified as academically at risk. Enhanced analytics and student feedback will allow for further interventions. Broader initiatives include curriculum redevelopment, assessment redesign, further development of student pulse surveys, and an institution-wide focus on uplifting first-year experiences.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

As a Catholic university, UNDA brings a distinctive perspective to the Australian research landscape as we address contemporary challenges and advance a better future. Our research vision investigates the causes and cures, problems and solutions, and fundamental truths of the world in which we live.

Transformative Research represents UNDA's commitment to enriching learning and teaching through high-quality research and scholarship. This foundational pillar embodies our mission to create and transmit new knowledge while making meaningful positive impact by undertaking research that addresses real-world issues and challenges. The emphasis remains on developing knowledge and solutions with measurable impact, maintaining the highest standards of academic excellence while contributing to societal advancement and the common good.

As a Catholic university, our research endeavours are guided by the fundamental belief that scholarship should serve humanity and contribute to integral human development. UNDA's research advances knowledge within academic disciplines while addressing pressing societal needs, reflecting our commitment to Catholic social teaching and the obligation to serve the wider community.

The strategic focus for 2025 and beyond emphasises research performance and advancing our ambitious growth agenda to be recognised as a university known for Transformative Research that changes lives and communities for the common good.

Strategic Initiatives

The establishment of the Vice Chancellor's Research Awards for excellence in research and research training, offered biennially and alternating with the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research's Big Ideas pitch scheme, provides ongoing recognition and incentive for research excellence while reinforcing our commitment to supporting outstanding scholarship.

Our research partnership strategy includes strengthening collaboration with the University of Notre Dame (ND) in the USA, particularly through the Centre for the History of Philosophy's partnership with the ND's History of Philosophy Forum. The University is developing major research partnerships with key healthcare industry partners through the Institute for Health Research, reflecting our commitment to research that directly impacts human health and wellbeing.

The development of research philanthropy initiatives, particularly the establishment of a donor-funded research program in Jewish Philosophy through the Centre for the History of Philosophy, demonstrates our commitment to expanding research capacity while maintaining the distinctive Catholic intellectual tradition.

The continued focus on external expert reviews of target Fields of Research provides evidence-based strategic development guidance, while the Notre Dame Transformative Research Fellowships program attracts outstanding researchers to priority research areas.

The development of online researcher support hubs for both Higher Degree Research students and staff represents our commitment to providing comprehensive support for the research community, ensuring all members have access to the resources and guidance needed to excel in their research endeavours.

Strategic Outcomes by 2026

- Excellence: Achieving World Standard performance in our target Fields of Research, with the quality of our research nationally and internationally recognised.
- Impact: Increased research engagement and impact outcomes, with significant growth in the size and scale of partnerships and documented evidence of research impact.
- Investment: Increased external research income, with significant growth in philanthropic and industry partner research income.
- Training (HDR): Increased high-quality HDR enrolments supported by industry partnerships and timely completions.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

Since our establishment, UNDA has provided professional experiences in authentic environments to ensure graduates are work-ready and equipped with the necessary skills to excel. Partnerships are critical, as the provision of excellent training for the professions forms part of our Objects of the University. For our current and future strategic plans, engagement with industry and partners represents a critical lever enabling students to graduate job-ready with community-mindedness and readiness to impact humanity beyond self.

Lifelong Learning and Continuing Education Framework and Action Plan

UNDA's Lifelong Learning and Continuing Education Framework and Action Plan establishes a comprehensive continuing education program. It defines the taxonomy for shorter-form, non-award offerings and establishes the roadmap to facilitate development of a sustainable program of offerings that are evidence-based, industry-aligned, and complement our degree programs.

It supports:

- Building additional pipelines into degree programs
- Enhancing industry, community, and government partnerships
- Maintaining currency with skills needs for improved graduate outcomes
- Ensuring the University provides educational offerings suited to a broader cohort of learners

The Framework defines an ecosystem of non-award programs – including learning bites, short courses, bootcamps, and micro-credentials – that cater to different learner needs and life stages. Micro-credentials play a central role as assessed, industry-aligned, and potentially credit-bearing offerings that provide stackable pathways into formal qualifications. Bootcamps and short courses deliver targeted, practical skills development, while learning bites serve as flexible entry points. Together, these offerings enable students, alumni, and professionals to build skills rapidly and continuously, with potential recognition through credit or advanced standing.

Partnerships with industry and community organisations ensures offerings remain relevant and aligned with current workforce demands and future trends. These collaborations enable program co-design, employer endorsement, and integration of professional standards, strengthening our external relationships while supporting graduate employability and professional advancement. This approach aligns with the Accord by broadening access, fostering equity, and creating seamless pathways between schools, VET, higher education, and work.

Employability

UNDA's Employability Framework (under development) provides a whole-of-institution approach ensuring every student is prepared for meaningful work, lifelong learning, and leadership for the common good. It integrates Career Development, Experiential Learning (including Work Integrated Learning), and Industry & Community Engagement within a unified student lifecycle model: Discover, Develop, Drive.

Building on our strong graduate outcomes, the Framework responds to emerging challenges including a diversifying student cohort, shifting workforce needs, and new national policy directions under the Accord. It embeds employability across curriculum and co-curriculum, guided by principles of inclusivity, collaboration, and mission alignment.

The Framework directly supports our Compact priorities by addressing student success, equity, and workforce readiness. It ensures compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (2021), HESA 2003, and ESOS 2000, while aligning with Commonwealth priorities for career development and work-integrated learning. Key measures include embedding employability in 100% of programs, achieving 80% student participation in WIL, and exceeding national graduate employment benchmarks by +5%. Strategic enablers include expanded career services staffing, investment in digital platforms such as CareerHub, enhanced data and governance capability, and stronger industry partnerships across Catholic, regional, and global networks. By aligning employability with the Lifelong Learning Framework, students and alumni can continue reskilling through micro-credentials and stackable learning, ensuring employability becomes a defining feature of a UNDA experience.

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
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In the presence of:

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In the presence of:

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Chief of Staff

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