



2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and The University of Sydney

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

Our [Sydney in 2032 Strategy](#) articulates the University's vision: "Building on the First Nations knowledge of these lands, we are Australia's first university, Sydney's university and a great global university."

2025 is the third year of strategic initiatives designed to deliver on our priority aspirations for the decade. Those aspirations are for:

- **our student-focused education to be transformational**
- **our community to thrive through diversity**
- **our research to be excellent, tackle the greatest challenges and contribute to the common good**
- the University to be "a better place to work, and a place that works better".

We track performance against these aspirations via a suite of indicators including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and report regularly to our Senate and [annually to the NSW Parliament](#) on progress towards our strategic goals.

Approach to national and sector priorities

Workforce and skill needs

Our graduates are [sought after globally](#) for their knowledge, qualities and transferable skills. By focusing on [industry engagement in teaching and learning](#), responsible leadership in the innovative use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and high-quality, industry-engaged research training, we are addressing national priorities in areas including agriculture, clean energy, defence, engineering, computer science, data analysis, teaching, veterinary sciences, and the health workforce. We are equipping our graduates to be lifelong learners, and are creating [flexible microcredentials](#) and [other short courses](#) to support this.

Ensuring student and staff safety

Our commitment to protecting the mental and physical [safety and wellbeing of our students and staff](#) includes a robust [Support for Students](#) policy framework and [related student services](#). We are committed to publishing annually a [report on sexual misconduct](#).

Cyber and data security

Our rigorous, standards-based approach to [managing cyber security risks](#) is fundamental to our ability to excel in research and education. As all members of our community share a responsibility to mitigate cyber security threats, we provide mandatory training to all staff and deliver extensive cybersecurity education, training and research.

Upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom

Our [Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#) underpins our approach to fostering free inquiry and academic debate. As a member of the [Australia Section of Scholars at Risk](#) we provide fellowships for foreign academics or higher degree by research students facing persecution or other threats. Following the [Hodgkinson External Review Report \(2024\)](#) we are implementing recommendations to further strengthen the University community's wellbeing, while safeguarding academic freedom and freedom of speech. We report annually to the NSW Parliament on our actions to protect and uphold freedom of speech and academic freedom.

Countering foreign interference

International collaborations are fundamental to our mission, and we provide a range of supporting material to our staff, guided by all relevant Australian laws, the government's latest [Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector](#) and our own [International collaboration principles](#). We refresh annually an integrated foreign interference plan, which complies or aligns with the various relevant federal laws and guidelines. We report regularly on our mitigation priorities, approach, incidents and emerging issues to the University's Senate Performance and Risk Committee.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

Equity is a [key element of the University's strategic agenda](#). We are committed to enabling more students from under-represented backgrounds to enrol at the University and succeed. Our outreach begins with partnerships across schools and community organisations. We deliver targeted programs for First Nations, regional, remote, and students from low socioeconomic status areas (LSES) through residential, campus experiences, school visits, webinars, and 1:1 consultation. We offer [entry schemes](#) for these cohorts that provide admission with reduced ATAR requirements and a broad range of scholarships which can be applied for via a single scholarship application.

Our Extended Bachelor Program provides a non-ATAR pathway for First Nations students into four undergraduate degrees, which include a foundation year. All Extended Bachelor students receive a duration-degree scholarship, and accommodation and cultural support.

The [Gadigal Centre](#) provides pastoral and academic support for First Nations students. The Centre's [MOBS](#) cultural enrichment and peer mentoring program supports cultural identity, leadership and sense of belonging in the community – ensuring students succeed in their academic goals and future careers.

Our [MySydney Scholars Program](#) is available to all new LSES students and offers reduced ATAR requirements and a duration-degree scholarship to improve access and support the costs of living and studying. Tailored wraparound services support students' success and belonging through connection with peers, access to academic support, and a co-curricular program to develop professional skills and confidence. MySydney Scholars report feeling supported by the University across multiple dimensions.

The University is determined to provide accessible and supportive environments where [students with disability](#) can succeed. Each student registered for disability support, including student carers, receives a personalised academic plan, detailing course requirements and recommended adjustments and learning supports. This plan formally communicates the relevant adjustments to staff and is reviewed each semester.

We provide financial and accommodation support to students from rural and remote areas, many of whom are moving to Sydney for the first time.

The [Khuda Women in STEM Program](#) supports young women from Western Sydney to access and pursue education and careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) — from Year 7 through to university graduation and beyond.

Many students are part of multiple under-represented groups. Our holistic support for students from all under-represented backgrounds focuses on enabling student success through transition programs, social connections and networks, specialised staff support, mentoring, financial support and dedicated spaces.

We assess our programs through participant survey results and focus group feedback, including measuring belonging, satisfaction, skill development, confidence, support, and wellbeing. Student feedback is interpreted in the context of objective outcomes, including attendance rates, offer and enrolment statistics, success and retention. The [Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework](#) guides our program evaluation. Additionally, we involve students as partners in the co-design of support initiatives and continuous improvement of our programs.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

The University of Sydney is committed to [becoming the leading Group of Eight \(Go8\) institution](#) for teaching and learning by 2032. While there is evidence of outstanding teaching practice occurring across the institution, variation exists across faculties, courses, and units. To generate robust and actionable insights to improve teaching quality, we are currently improving our internal teaching evaluation measures. This initiative will deliver a validated instrument that is integrated into institutional data systems and business processes to support continuous improvement and academic development, and to increase accountability for teaching quality across the institution.

The University has also moved strongly in response to the emergence of Generative AI (GenAI). Across 2024-25 we have been a global leader in GenAI adoption and governance by pioneering the [two-lane assessment approach](#), with discipline-specific action plans under development to secure learning outcomes and promote academic integrity. Our world-leading Cogniti platform allows educators to design custom GenAI agents and has won multiple global awards. From 2026-28, the *Teaching and Learning Response to AI* ([Artificial intelligence and education at Sydney](#)) initiative will embed and operationalise the University's assessment framework to consistently secure assessments and assure learning outcomes. Further, it will introduce and evaluate the effectiveness of GenAI tools, support students and staff in the ethical and responsible use of GenAI, and align course learning outcomes with the capabilities demanded in a GenAI world.

We continue to enhance our [Support for Students policy](#), which sets out our processes for identifying and supporting at-risk students. Cohort-specific support is provided for cohorts including international students, Indigenous students, and students from low-SES backgrounds. The policy, which includes mandatory feedback tasks for early year students, has already improved success rates and increased the number of students seeking academic plans for disabilities and academic support. The policy is reviewed annually, including assessing the resources required to maintain effective support, with outcomes reported to the University Executive and Academic Board.

While our [graduates are already in demand](#), we are working to further enhance how we support their employability. We have aligned key internal services and functions supporting Work Integrated Learning (WIL), and have grown our suite of [Industry and Community Project Units](#), which allow students to address authentic problems confronting industry, government, and community organisations. Our Careers Centre has expanded to provide a greater range of co-curricular support to students in their transition to the workforce.

The professional development of our academic staff is supported through formal and informal programs. Best practice is shared through faculty showcases and the annual [Sydney Teaching Symposium](#) which draws visitors from across NSW and beyond. The University's Academic Excellence Framework, which drives performance reviews and promotions, requires teaching staff to undertake ongoing development to enhance their teaching capabilities.

Our performance in student experience is measured through various external ranking surveys (e.g. [QILT Student Experience](#), the [AFR Best Universities Ranking](#)). We also monitor internal student surveys, performance metrics linked to our strategic plan, and have an enterprise risk matrix that measures progress, reporting regularly to the University's Senate.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Under our 2032 Strategy, we aspire to enable research that is excellent, tackles the greatest challenges and contributes to the common good. Our key research priorities are to:

- foster a culture where our Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students and academics can excel, engage and have impact
- focus investment on research with an excellent track record, or the strongest potential to deliver excellence
- leverage our comprehensiveness and partnerships to drive multidisciplinary problem-solving.

The University has embarked upon a suite of complementary strategic initiatives designed to improve research, research training and innovation in support of these priorities, which are overseen by dedicated executive steering committees. The first of these initiatives, launched in 2023, is the [Sydney Horizon Fellowship scheme](#).

Designed to have real-world impact on our most challenging societal problems, the scheme has empowered 38 of the world's most talented emerging academics to undertake innovative research that will build our understanding of, and resilience to, climate change; improve health outcomes; and create a more sustainable world.

Other initiatives include:

- a comprehensive training and development program supporting early and mid-career researchers to thrive in academia including a new, comprehensive [Researcher Development Hub](#)
- the creation of a **graduate research school**, launched in 2025, to support higher degree research students by providing improved student experience, outstanding supervision and researcher training. We will leverage our strong external partnerships to upscale industry engagement ensuring HDR research has impact for end users and preparing our alumni for a range of clear career pathways in which they can take leadership roles
- establishing a **new whole-of-University multidisciplinary initiative** (MDI) in an identified area of research strength - the Sydney [Net Zero Initiative](#) launched in 2024 to explore technologies and systems that reduce climate change risks, lower demand, remove greenhouse gases, and support industry in developing innovative low-emissions energy solutions
- new programs to support an institutional **focus on increasing research commercialisation and translation** (including social enterprise). These include an expanded Research Impact Proof-of-Concept Fund, the [PERIscope Commercialisation Awards](#) and engagement events such as an annual 'lab to market' showcase of research impact through commercialisation
- major digital and physical research infrastructure projects, including:
myResearchSydney, a new intuitional research management system that enables greater efficiency; a roadmap for the University's high performance computing infrastructure, which is crucial for empowering researchers
- the [Sydney Biomedical Accelerator](#), a visionary partnership between the University and Sydney Local Health District to create a world-leading health, education and biomedical research complex by 2028.

Links: [Core Research Facilities](#); [Charles Perkins Centre](#); [Brain and Mind Centre](#); [Sydney Nano Institute](#); [Sydney Policy Lab](#); [Indigenous Research Strategy](#); [Student Entrepreneurship](#); [Sydney Knowledge Hub](#); [Global Engagement](#).

The University has a comprehensive set of research performance metrics linked to our strategic plan and an enterprise risk matrix to measure progress against these goals, which are reported regularly to the University's Senate.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

By [working with our partners and communities](#) we are all stronger, and the impact and influence of our research and teaching is greater. Our 2032 Strategy aims to ensure that the work of the University is more compelling, and more important to society, than at any other time in our history, recognising that partnership, including with industry, is essential for us to meet this ambition.

Our strategy formally recognises most complex problems require partnership to deliver solutions. By 2032, we aim to be consistently great partners, and people will seek us out as a partner of choice in our local, national and international communities.

We offer opportunities for industry to collaborate with our researchers, access research facilities, obtain consultancy services, work with our students, or license or invest in our large portfolio of investments.

To ensure strategic collaboration, we maintain three key levels of external engagement and partnership management. Faculty external engagement teams manage faculty-specific partnerships and relationships directly. A University-wide external engagement function supports the faculties and manages multi-faculty partnerships. This function allows for personalised and consistent relationship management over time and without the constraints of being project based. An External Engagement Community of Practice brings together leaders in the external engagement community to share information and ensure best practice is developed and embedded across our strategic priorities.

Our partners are diverse in size, objectives and expectations. Embracing this diversity, we work with each of them to create a shared understanding of what a successful partnership looks like – whether they be a multinational company, a public organisation, a donor, one of our alumni, or a local community group. We seek to make all our partners feel welcome, and we will celebrate with them the positive impact of our collaboration.

We go out of our way to resolve issues that stand in the way of creating and sustaining effective partnerships. We value and reward the ability to nurture strong, enduring partnerships across our community. While these relationships will change over time, we continually invest in the skills and knowledge of our staff, so that we ensure a consistently positive partnership experience.

To deliver, we invest more time and attention into personal interactions with our current and potential partners, and in the systems that support our people to be great partners. This enables us to respond more quickly to change and opportunity brought about by digital disruption, or new funding opportunities to meet government priorities.

Our partners – and the broader community – acknowledge, understand and value our work. Our reputation as an excellent collaborator helps decision-makers to understand and respect our contribution to society.

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
The University of Sydney
by

Professor Mark Scott AO

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor and President

Position

Signature

12 November 2025

Date

In the presence of:

Rachel Searl

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

In the presence of:

Vanessa Roberts

Witness (please print)

Correspondence Manager

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature