



2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Torrens University 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.

Since the 2023-2024 mission-based compact, Torrens University Australia (Torrens) has further refined its purpose and strategy to be relevant in a changing education landscape in Australia and build on our successful initial ten-year approach of maintaining a strong focus on accessible and relevant education.

Torrens overarching purpose statement ***“empowering futures with flexible and purposeful real-world education and research”*** guides our strategy and annual priorities. The purpose reflects our desire to unlock dynamic and opportune futures for our students, and through them for society.

Our purpose cascades into our mission to ***“be the best University for people who work and need study to fit into their lives and lift their career potential.”*** This reflects a strategic choice to focus on providing market leading education to the increasing number of working people, who need education to fit around them, not the other way around.

Our mission has two key foci:

- **Flexibility:** Reorienting to reduce friction into and in education while working—moving from fixed timetables and rigid structures toward accessibility, predictability, choice, personalisation, and adaptability.
- **Applied Learning:** Lifting career potential through theory-to-practice education incorporating industry trends, real-world applications, and curriculum co-designed with employers.

Our staff and student journey is underpinned by strong principles of safety and freedom. These are enshrined in policies, principles and processes in place, covering Academic Freedom, Health and Safety, Respect and Safety, as well as frequent updates on mitigating cyber and data security risks. These include:

- 1) **Workforce and skill needs:** Robust workforce planning and annual staff performance review processes focused on progress towards outcomes over time, training and development, and success behaviours. In addition, we maintain a dynamic process of designing, developing and launching employee tools, learning programs and initiatives to build organisational capability and employee performance in line with our strategic goals.
- 2) **Student and staff safety:** Health & safety policies and guidelines that are aimed at supporting our commitment to ensuring the health and safety of workers, students and others involved in, or affected by, our activities.
- 3) **Countering foreign interference:** Policies to ensure compliance with the responsibilities under Australian legislation and guidelines concerning universities and foreign interference.
- 4) **Cyber and data security:** Policies, proactive monitoring, and staff training in place to minimise risk.
- 5) **Upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom:** Comprehensive policies and principles to ensure that the freedom of lawful speech (both staff and students) and academic freedom is treated as a paramount value and is not restricted in any way.

Our strong performance in these areas was recently reflected in our successful TEQSA re-registration as an Australian University for the maximum period of 7 years.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

Torrens aims to be one of Australia's most academically, socially and culturally accessible and inclusive universities, supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds—such as First Nations peoples, rural and regional communities, low socio-economic groups, and non-traditional learners—to succeed. Initiatives to support students and staff development are outlined in four key plans and program areas:

- Engagement and Access Plan (2025 – 2027)
- First Nations Strategic Plan (2024 – 2027)
- First Year Experience (FYE) Program
- Torrens University Language Centre (TULC)

Key areas of focus include flexible pathways, targeted financial and academic support, promoting inclusive teaching and learning practices, fostering inclusive and culturally safe campus culture, student voice, cohort data analysis, and developing partnerships to benefit students.

Strategic Priorities and Key Targets

1. Flexible Access Pathways

- Undergraduate Certificate Pathway courses (AQF 5) in Health, Business, ICT, and Design will launch in Trimester 2, 2026, offering scaffolded entry and credit for prior learning
- Non-award enabling and pathway options will be expanded to support undergraduate and postgraduate entry, integrating micro-credentials and prior learning.
- Credit/Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies will be consolidated by Q4 2025, streamlining processes as an enabler for advanced standing for life and work experience.
- Sophia subject options will be leveraged as a cost-effective pathway option for new students, building confidence to study at university level.

2. Academic Partnerships and Community Connection

- Torrens is considering options to engage with Regional University Study Hub (RUSH) networks to support rural, regional, and remote students across its faculty program areas.
- Faculty-based initiatives focusing on cohort support will be expanded to support students in completing work-based placements.

3. Academic Literacy and Confidence Building

- Initiatives to ensure student readiness and success in their first trimester of study will be introduced for pathway students and remediation programs for students requiring additional support.
- Micro-credentials for pre-enrolment preparation and academic support will be developed by Q2 2026.
- English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs, provided through TULC, will expand for international students to prepare them for Higher Degree Research program enrolment.

4. Staff Development, Benchmarking, and Scholarship

- An Accessibility and Inclusion Community of Practice will be established by Q4 2025, with increased staff engagement and external speakers throughout 2026.
- Torrens will participate in national accessibility benchmarking efforts, including participation in the Australasian Council of Digital Education benchmarking for Accessibility (July 2025) and ADCET/WIL/First Nations panels, to inform staff and promote inclusive and accessible practice.

4. Evidence-informed Cohort Support

- Cohort-based dashboards will be developed to evaluate student progress to inform targeted interventions and program design as per the University's Tiered Student Support model.

KEY TEACHING AND LEARNING PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES:

Torrens University is developing a new Learning and Teaching Plan 2026-2027, which will provide a renewed focus on academic quality, student success and teaching excellence. The University is also undertaking a comprehensive review of the Academic Framework to ensure this guiding architecture remains contemporary, evidence-based, fit for purpose and aligned to sector expectations as well as ensuring our teaching and learning environment meets the evolving needs of a diverse student body.

1. Advancing Learning-Oriented Assessment and Feedback

In 2026, Torrens will commence a major initiative to transition to a **learning-oriented approach to assessment** that focuses on Assurance of Learning (AoL), embedding authenticity in assessment design and delivery, and driving student success and outcomes.

Specific Interventions:

- Transformation of assessment tasks: All new and redeveloped subjects will replace traditional assessment tasks with authentic, industry-aligned, scenario-based assessments that explicitly evidence graduate outcomes and employability skills.
- Assurance of Learning: Assessments in core subjects will be explicitly aligned to Course Learning Outcomes with clear evidence of AoL.
- Strengthened feedback practices: Feedback will be reframed as *feed-forward*, with students receiving actionable, developmental guidance that supports application in future tasks. The use of exemplars, interactive oral assessments and portfolio-based reviews will be expanded.
- Enhanced Rubrics: A University-wide initiative to develop **robust, developmental rubrics** will ensure clarity of standards, consistency of grading, and richer opportunities for reflection. Rubrics will incorporate performance descriptors aligned with employability skills and capabilities.
- Ethical integration of technology and innovation: Digital tools, including AI-enabled feedback engines will be deployed in a managed innovation environment to scale timely, personalised and ethical assessment feedback to students.

Targets and metrics:

- By end of 2026, all new and redeveloped subjects to include authentic, industry-aligned, scenario-based assessment tasks.
- 50% of all courses to demonstrate AoL mapping by 2027.
- QILT “skills development” items to improve by 2-3% by 2027.

For Equity groups (other than First Nations):

- Progression gaps for equity cohorts (low-SES, regional/remote students) reduced by at least 2% by 2026.

2. Supporting At-Risk Students and Addressing ‘Zero Fail’ Outcomes

In 2026, Torrens will design and implement initiatives to address its high attrition and progression risk and the “zero fail” cohort.

Specific Interventions:

- Systematic early identification and triage: Using enhanced analytics and predictive modelling, students will be flagged at key risk points to enact tailored outreach.
- “Zero Fail” management and early intervention mechanisms: Procedures to strengthen admissions quality, reduce non-genuine enrolments and provide timely intervention and support to at-risk students will be established.
- Academic Progression Processes: Academic progression policies and procedures will be reviewed and enhanced to expand existing practices and measures, to support at-risk students and support progression and completion particularly in the first year.
- Student Support Ecosystem: Expansion of bridging, orientation, and customised programs to strengthen student success, with targeted initiatives to address the needs of equity cohorts.

Targets and metrics:

- 5% reduction in students with >50% failure rates by end of 2026.
- 5% increase in progression rates for fully online students by end of 2027.
- QILT “skills development” items to improve by 2-3% by 2027.

For Equity groups (other than First Nations):

- 3% increase in progression rates for equity cohorts (low-SES, regional/remote students) by 2026.
- Targeted initiatives to increase access pathways and support for regional/remote students

Strategic Research Plan 2025–2026

REFINED PRIORITIES FOR IMPACTFUL AND INCLUSIVE RESEARCH

Building on the foundation of our Strategic Research Plan 2021–2025, Torrens University will launch an updated plan for 2026. The 2025–2026 priorities aim to expand high-quality, project-driven research that benefits diverse communities. These priorities draw on Torrens’ strengths in HDR programs, international and regional collaboration, and research with tangible social impact, delivering measurable benefits in Australia and globally.

1. World-Class, Project-Driven Research

Torrens University is committed to research excellence through substantive projects aligned with priority Fields of Research (FoR) codes, delivering national and international impact.

- FoR groups will focus on outputs in high-quality Q1 journals, aligned with recognised disciplinary standards.
- Research reporting will track substantive projects, measuring trends and outcomes across reporting periods. Projects will generate multiple high-impact outputs (such as publications, reports, or creative works), involve teams with staff and/or HDR students, and demonstrate active collaboration (nationally, internationally, or with external funding).
- Project outcomes demonstrate scale, sustainability, and clear pathways for further outputs (such as additional grants, partnerships, or adoption in policy, practice, or creative industries).
- Investment in the research workforce for targeted FoR codes to meet world standards for output volume and quality.
- Grow quality publication outputs in Q1 journals by 10 percent

2. Research Capability and Inclusive HDR Pathways

Torrens University will strengthen HDR supervision and increase enrolments, while maintaining a high-quality student experience.

- Increase HDR enrolments through targeted recruitment and cross-sector projects.
- Establish a register of 250 qualified supervisors, with at least 75% as principal supervisors.
- Raise entry standards by requiring an IELTS-equivalent of 7.0 for HDR programs to ensure readiness and progression.
- Implement a policy framework to support staff development, research training and research activity.
- Ensure equitable HDR access and support for linguistically diverse cohorts.
- Integrate HDR and professional doctorate projects with industry collaboration and community impact focus.

- Align expertise with FoR 32, 35, 42, and 46 to sustain high-quality outputs, HDR completions, and enable interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Grow enrolled PhD students by 10 percent
- Maintain HDR progress at 90 percent

3. Industry, Commercialisation, Community, and Partnerships

Torrens University will broaden partnerships with industry, government, NGOs, and communities to ensure research informs innovation and has real-world impact both globally and across regional Australia.

- Assess opportunities for collaborative research units in offshore and rural/remote locations, enabling joint HDR supervision and project collaboration.
- Support and mentor competitive grant applications and projects with demonstrable community or industry or policy impact.
- Enhance mentoring for Category 1 grants to boost competitiveness and accelerate translation of research into industry outcomes.
- Increase category 1 grant submissions by 10 percent

Torrens University has implemented a refreshed Industry Engagement Strategy designed to connect, develop, and nurture strategic partnerships that create opportunities for students, staff, alumni, and industry. The strategy fosters mutual benefit through collaboration, innovation, brand strengthening, and future-focused solutions.

KEY FOCUS AREAS

1. **Connecting Students and Industry through Work Integrated Learning (WIL)**

The strategy prioritises relevant, discipline-specific WIL opportunities across all faculties.

- *Design & Creative Technology*: Emphasis on live industry projects, speaker series, and thought leadership events.
- *Business, IT & Hospitality*: Hospitality students undertake placements; IT and Business students engage in guest lectures, live briefs, and Social Enterprise Hub projects.
- *Health & Education*: Large-scale placements aligned with accreditation bodies (e.g., ACA, AARPN, CDNM). Health students also gain experience through The Practice Wellbeing Centre.

2. **Industry-Informed Curriculum Development**

TUA's courses are developed in consultation with industry experts.

- *Architecture*: Input from BVN and Stanic Harding shaped the Bachelor of Architectural Technology, focusing on innovation and sustainability.
- *ICT*: The Australian Computer Society (ACS) helped align graduate outcomes with industry needs.
- *Creative Industries*: Adobe partnership supports WIL, staff capability development, and software-integrated assessments.

3. **Strategic Partnerships**

Torrens defines strategic partnerships as mutually beneficial agreements that foster deep engagement and shared goals. These partnerships drive innovation and learning. Current partners include Vogue, IBM, Hilton, Marriott, Microsoft, Canva, Sony PlayStation, Codex Consulting, Telstra, SAS, and Flight Centre.

4. **Collaborative Research**

Torrens promotes open collaboration with industry, government, and communities to ensure curriculum relevance and graduate readiness. This approach supports impactful, real-world research outcomes.

5. **Workforce Development (B2B)**

Torrens delivers future-focused education and training solutions to strategic partners across Australasia. Led by the B2B team, the strategy addresses workforce challenges and expands access to learning for employers and employees. Key partners include AFLPA, Flight Centre, Telstra, GenU, and vocational pathway providers. A new focus area is developing partnerships with First Nations and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

6. **Alumni Engagement**

In 2025, Torrens established a dedicated Alumni Engagement team to build a vibrant, mutually beneficial alumni community. Alumni benefit from scholarships, networking, and job opportunities, while current students gain access to live briefs, placements, and mentorship.

Led by the Director of Industry and Alumni, the integrated Industry, Employability, Workforce Development, and Alumni teams work collaboratively to maximise strategic partnership outcomes.

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
Torrens University Australia
by

Professor Hendrik Alwyn Louw

Full name (please print)

Vice Chancellor and President

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12/11/2025

Signature

In the presence of:

Rachel Searl

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

In the presence of:

Lisa Smith

Witness (please print)

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12/11/2025

Signature