



2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

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

In 2025, UNE is undertaking a strategic planning process. It is anticipated that the University Council (UNE's governing body) will approve the new strategic plan at its final 2025 meeting in December. The new plan will replace the current strategic plan and will focus on ensuring that UNE meets its enduring mission as a regional university, and the emergent needs of its stakeholders. Until that time UNE continues to operate under its current strategic plan. This can be reviewed at the following link:

<https://www.une.edu.au/strategic-plan>

The University of New England's (UNE) 2021-2030 Strategic Plan outlines three overarching goals:

- To provide personalised learning journeys for our students which are distinctive in their accessibility and flexibility;
- To empower our communities by creating and sharing knowledge to make a difference locally, regionally and globally; and
- To build resilience by committing to environmental, social and financial resilience for the University, our staff, our students and our communities.

Progress towards each goal is monitored against a series of key result areas which track the long-term performance and health of the organisation. Performance is benchmarked against the sector and comparator group norms. This information is reviewed on a regular basis throughout the year, by UNE's Executive and Council. The 2025-28 Business Plan sets an agenda which focuses the immediate attention of the university on four critical priorities which were established in 2024. These are:

- Increasing student enrolments and improving retention
- Staff satisfaction and safety at work
- Meeting our critical regulatory and compliance obligations
- Managing risk in our critical infrastructure.

The Business Plan is set in the context of a planning, performance and risk management framework and will be reviewed and refreshed annually in light of performance and environmental changes.

In relation to national and sector priorities, UNE ensures that these are a core component of the way in which we deliver education and undertake research. For information on specific sector-wide issues, the following links provide detailed information in relation to how UNE addresses these in its policy framework:

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Support Policy](#)
- [Sexual Harm and Harassment Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Foreign Interference and transparency in foreign relations](#)
- [Cyber and Data security](#)
- [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Statement](#)
- [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy](#)

These policies are reviewed as part of UNE's standard governance and quality assurance processes.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

The University of New England remains steadfast in its foundational mission to serve regional Australia and provide educational opportunities for those who would not otherwise have access to university education. UNE's emerging strategic vision positions the university as an active partner in community success, connecting individual aspirations directly to community outcomes.

Pathways: Our equity framework begins with transparent and supportive admissions processes, as outlined in our [Admissions, Credit and Enrolment Policy](#), ensuring prospective students receive appropriate guidance about their educational journey from first contact through graduation. To strengthen this pathway, our Higher Education Continuity Grant (HECG) investment includes development of AI-customised support systems for the critical "offer to enrolment" transition, providing personalised guidance to help prospective students navigate admission, course selection, and enrolment processes—particularly benefiting first-in-family and regional students who may lack traditional support networks.

UNE is undertaking a significant expansion of our Foundation Studies (FFUR) program which will adopt a non-deficit approach and deliver tailored university preparation to non-traditional learners. We aim to grow this fee-free pathway from 65 EFTSL in 2024 to 85 EFTSL in 2025 and 170 EFTSL in 2026.

Proactive supports: Once students have commenced with UNE, comprehensive support mechanisms ensure those needing assistance are quickly identified and supported. UNE's Atrium platform identifies students at risk based on demographic and equity characteristics, enabling targeted interventions. This system has already demonstrated substantial impact for identified at-risk cohorts from 2024 to 2025. Development of Atrium will continue in 2026 with a focus on increasing spread and volume of indicators through which early identification of at-risk students occurs and extending the number of UNE support services that are able to utilise real-time identification metrics.

Our commitment to regional and low socioeconomic status students: In Trimester 2 2025, UNE piloted targeted bursaries for HEPPP-eligible students to support their participation in mandatory intensive schools — a critical component of many courses that had become increasingly challenging due to cost-of-living pressures. This initiative demonstrated exceptional success: students receiving bursaries showed pre-census withdrawal rates of just 2 % from intensive school units compared to 20% for non-recipients. Moreover, bursary recipients demonstrated markedly lower pre-census withdrawal rates from their other units (3% versus 16%), confirming our hypothesis that addressing financial barriers has cascading positive effects on overall student retention. Based on these outcomes we will expand this program throughout 2025-26.

Indigenous participation and success: The University is confident that it will maintain a steady increase in student numbers throughout the compact period, driven by the effectiveness of its current recruitment and retention programs through the Oorala student centre. Beyond participation, UNE acknowledges the critical need to address Indigenous student success. We are committed to improving Indigenous student retention 1% on 2024 in 2025 and by a further 0.5% in 2026. These targets are supported by [UNE's Indigenous Education Strategy](#) (to be extended for 2026 and rewritten for 2027-2031).

Disability support: UNE remains committed to its HECG plan target to increase retention of students with a disability by 0.25% year on year through the compact period - and will review its implementation of Universal Design for Learning and supports for students with a disability in 2026 to ensure continued improvement.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

UNE follows a detailed [Teaching and Learning Plan 2023-2030](#) that contains a range strategies to improve teaching and learning outcomes across the four following domains:

- The student experiences
- A connected curriculum
- Place-based education and partnerships
- Scholarship, reward and recognition

Over the course of 2025-6 there are activities aimed at uplifting the quality of teaching and learning at UNE, including:

- The implementation of a formalised peer-review-of-teaching process,
- The implantation of a UNE Assessment Architecture to balance assurance of learning requirements with industry and community expectation for the use of Artificial Intelligence tools,
- The development and implementation of professional development resources related to industry aligned and technology enabled curriculum design.

The UNE [Student Support Plan](#) articulates how student success is framed and what strategies and initiatives are deployed to improve student engagement and student success. Key strategies including the plan are: course advising, early identification and support for vulnerable students (focused on student support services), early, intensive and continuous intervention and internal and external support for specialist areas.

Specific student support activities for 2025-6 have a specific focus on the preparedness of commencing students. A key activity is the implementation of the UNE Belong Initiative, which aims to support student transition into, and preparedness for, higher education studies for all commencing students.

UNE's specific support processes for at 'risk students' are outlined in the [Student Support Policy](#) and associated procedures. The policy and procedures implement a formal three-tier support model to effectively support students at various levels of risk in their student journey.

In 2025-6 UNE is also supporting student success through initiatives such as the implementation of its [Madgwick Student](#) Enterprise AI Platform. The platform provides access to transformational technology and provides students with access to sector leading learning support technology.

Form 2026, UNE will be implementing a new Strategic Plan, which contains specific commitments to students to improve the student experience, retention and success at UNE.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

UNE's [Research Engagement & Enterprise Plan \(REEP\)](#) provides a program of initiatives over five years to bolster, connect and accelerate UNE's research portfolio. The plan is designed to be agile and will be amended once the UNE Strategy is released in 2025-26. Over the coming year (2025/26), the following initiatives will be taken forward under the five REEP themes

- Theme 1 - Flagships and priorities
 - **REZ and Emissions Flagship**
 - **Ag and Environmental Tech Flagship**
 - **Digital Futures Flagship**
 - **One Health Flagship**
 - **Indigenous Research Strategy**
- Theme 2 - Grants, infrastructure and capacity
- Theme 3 - Research culture, performance, training and recognition
- Theme 4 - IP systems, tools and industry networks
- Theme 5 - Engagement and outreach, locally, nationally and globally

The Research Performance Framework sets out the targets and benchmarks for UNE on an annual basis. These are set early in the calendar year for reporting 12 months later.

Initiatives and measures	Benchmarks / Targets 2025 (as a range) (from Researcher Performance Framework)
Initiatives to improve research proposals	Cat 1 awards: # = 31/35, value = \$45m / \$49.5m Cat 2 awards: # = 23/24, value = \$4.9m / \$5.1m Cat 3 awards: # = 45/47, value = \$5m / \$5.2m
Initiatives to diversify income	Range of \$value targets across 2 digit FORs and across Cat1,2,3,4 schemes
Indigenous HDR enrolments	3 / 4 commencing and 3 / 4 completions
HDR Student enrolments	81 / 85
Maintain UNE HDR stipend	Set at 10% above award level and for indigenous students 30%
HDR on-time completions	50% / 55%
Increase quality and quantity of research outputs	UNE FWCI average = 1.23 / 1.29 Metrics for outputs per FTE at different levels
Competitiveness with Australian Universities in terms of research outputs	COKI- calculated metrics where UNE in top ten for 4-Digit FOR: 16 / 17

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

Throughout 2025 and 2026, UNE will focus on expanding its existing relationships with industry as well as the development of new partnership arrangements in targeted areas. This includes:

- UNE's [Agricultural Business Research Institute \(ABRI\)](#), our exceptionally successful beef genetics tool, Breedplan, will be further developed to provide genetics insights into the sheep industry.
- The [UNE Smart Region Incubator \(UNE SRI\)](#) will extend its activities across Armidale, Tamworth, Moree and Narrabri, by providing support for innovation across the New England North West of NSW by connecting founders, researchers, school and university students, mentors, experts, investors, government and business partners.
- In 2025-26 UNE will commence a series of partnerships with private health providers to upskill nursing and health support staff across NSW to meet significant work force demand across the sector.
- As part of UNE's Research Enterprise and Engagement Plan UNE is developing Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven mapping and partnering tools to identify UNE capabilities and strengths and match these to industry and commercial partner needs and priorities. This will drive interactions and engagements that are informed and effective in aligning industry needs to UNE offerings.
- New research centres and institutes are being planned to coordinate UNE research capabilities with an emphasis on external industry engagement. This includes in methane reduction for agriculture, as well as water quality and quantity collaborations.
- The University is building on the successes of the Poultry Hub Australia effort, to better align UNE research strengths with industry and government needs. During 2025-26 we are developing a UNE Poultry Strategy to focus efforts in-line with government and industry needs, including – disease and biosecurity; nutrition and animal health and well-being; waste management and circular economy and environmental sustainability.

As a regional university, UNE's engagement with industry is a foundational component of our civic mission. It not only informs our curriculum and research priorities but is a key element of our role as a vital institution to support regional economic development. Therefore, our new 2026-2035 Strategic Plan, *Connecting Individual Aspirations to Community Outcomes*, focuses on collaborations with businesses and industries in a community context, that are designed to give effect to this ambition.

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

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Vice Chancellor & CEO

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**Professor Christopher Moran approve
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