2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and The University of New South Wales

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 New South Wales founding purpose remains our defining mission: to deliver public good through knowledge, skills and innovation.

Our new Strategy *Progress for All* (2025–2035) sets the course for the next decade. It defines UNSW's goals and focus to transform and support our education, research, engagement, culture, systems so that we can deliver tangible societal impact. Progress towards achieving these goals will be measured through regular reports and annual plans, and operationalised through our innovative societal impact framework (SIF)which will measure not only research impact, but the societal impact of all university activity.

The 2025 UNSW Operational Plan includes 28 institution-wide initiatives. Key areas include:

- **Transformative Education** – building future-ready graduates whose degree programs include societal impact, innovation, and Indigenous knowledges along with discipline excellence, expanding lifelong and transnational education, and implementing a unified employability framework.
- **Innovative Research and Translation** – advancing national innovation and productivity through interdisciplinary collaboration, digital and AI-enabled research infrastructure, and industry partnerships.
- **Meaningful Engagement** – operationalising the SIF to guide partnerships, policy engagement and civic collaboration locally and globally.
- **People and Culture** – building a safe, inclusive and high performing workforce, supported by the Gender Equity Strategy, the Indigenous Workforce Plan, Speak Up framework, Work Health and Safety Strategy and continued implementation of pay-confidence reforms, all of which have robust governance, reporting, and consultation mechanisms.
- **Enabling Systems and Security** – advancing the Campus Master Plan, enterprise data management and cyber-security maturity, ensuring compliance with the Defence Industry Security Program.

UNSW's Strategy and Operational Plan align with Commonwealth objectives under the Accord, supporting:

- **Workforce and Skills Development**: equitable access, lifelong learning and employability aligned to national and regional skills needs.
- **Student and Staff Safety**: evidence-based wellbeing initiatives and strong safety governance, including alignment of organisational activities, policies and capabilities with the new National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence, and developed in consultation with our diverse community of students and staff.
- **Cyber and Data Security**: institution-wide security uplift protecting research, data and intellectual property, and the adoption of a defence-in-depth approach to managing cybersecurity risks, aligned to international standards and underpinned by a risk management framework.
- **Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**: upheld through UNSW's Values in Action - Excellence, Innovation, Collaboration, Diversity and Respect - and embedded in policy and practice, including all levels of academic governance and decision making.
- **Countering foreign interference**: UNSW's National Security team focuses on international collaborations and research security, maintaining relationships with government and security agencies.

All of UNSW's activities are underpinned by strong governance, supported by subject matter experts, transparent policy and procedural requirements, and subject to appropriate consultation and engagement. Decision making at UNSW is supported by formal and informal governance structures with clear accountability, scope, and responsibilities, very much aligned to the recommendations in the recent Expert Council on University Governance report. All of this occurs within the regulatory and legislative frameworks that apply at both State and Federal levels.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

Equity in higher education has two key components: access and success. UNSW is committed to building an undergraduate community that reflects the broader Australian population by enabling access, participation, and success for students from equity cohorts. Our Widening Participation Strategy 2030 and Indigenous Strategy focus on outreach, access, participation and graduate success for underrepresented groups, including Indigenous students, low-SES, regional and remote, and educational disadvantage. The Gateway Equity Target (GET) underpins this commitment, aiming for 25% of commencing domestic undergraduates to come from low-SES, Indigenous, and socio-educationally disadvantaged schools by 2027. Through uplifting Gateway Program outreach and engagement activities across 2024 and 2025, in part supported by HECG funds, UNSW has made significant progress towards the GET and is on track to achieve the Target in 2026, a year ahead of schedule. Our KPIs track academic performance, progress, and retention to ensure equity cohorts achieve success comparable to the broader student population.

Support for these students includes the UNSW Gateway Program, which combines outreach, an admission pathway, scholarships, targeted transition and onboarding, and access to wellbeing services. A mentoring program connects students with Faculty schemes and student ambassadors from equity backgrounds. Faculties also provide tailored support for work-integrated learning and academic success through networking, academic advising, and financial aid. Academic support is coordinated through the Student Learning team and includes Peer Assisted Study Sessions and the embedding of academic literacies, numeracy, and inclusive teaching practices into first-year courses.

An expanded Widening Participation Strategy will strengthen the student voice, grow initiatives such as Students as Partners, and enhance inclusive teaching under UNSW's Progress for All framework. It will also introduce new measures for students with disabilities and other equity cohorts.

UNSW's Indigenous Student Success Strategy is driving a holistic approach to empower Indigenous students to engage with opportunities that contribute to their success, and a transformative student experience. Our newly appointed Executive Director Indigenous Students leads strategic outcomes, and our re-imagined vision for Nura Gili: Centre for Indigenous Programs positions it as a Centre of Excellence, delivering culturally grounded, relational and empowering experiences across the student lifecycle, connecting students to internal and external opportunities. To boost retention and success, UNSW is adopting a whole-of-university model. Faculties now have Indigenous success positions offering tutoring and discipline-specific opportunities. Our goal is a 10% increase in Indigenous enrolments in 2026, with recruitment driven by partnerships between Nura Gili, Faculties, and community programs. Applications for Indigenous pre-programs rose 39.6% in 2025, and Gateway Round 1 offers increased 48%. Current Indigenous success rates are 86.05%, with a target of 88%.

UNSW will use the funding provided under the HECG Equity Plan to bolster our current widening participation initiatives and new Tier 1 initiatives to build academic literacy and numeracy skills, aimed at closing the gap between students from underrepresented backgrounds and their counterparts.

Annual Impact statements & Outreach programs

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

Pillar 1 of the *Progress for All* strategy - through accessible education, empower current and future generations – sets the direction for a connected, impactful student experience that embeds Indigenous knowledges, fosters interdisciplinary learning, equips students with future-focused skills, and supports diverse learning pathways. This is achieved through comprehensive curriculum redesign including assessment and feedback transformation; onboarding, belonging and wellbeing; a simplification of the digital student experience, and a focus on experiential learning and employability.

Our Education Focussed (EF) academics, supported by the insights and leadership of the Scientia Education Academy, lead in education and pedagogical practice. Academics are supported through our Advance HE-accredited Foundations of Learning & Teaching program, our Course Design Institute (CDI), a targeted Course Enhancement Program, peer review of teaching, and digital learning technologies and platforms. Across 2025/2026, UNSW is aiming for a 30% increase in the number of academic staff attending professional development opportunities led by our Division of Education & Student Experience; that 80% of staff completing the CDI go on to implement course enhancements; and three Teaching Accelerator Programs be offered each year.

Through the Nexus Program, UNSW is investing in an additional 40 EF staff (above the current 534 EF staff) over 2023-26 – the single largest investment in teaching focussed staff. Nexus is focussed on assessment transformation and embedding belonging and wellbeing, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and industry relevancy, digital literacies, diversity and inclusion, and societal impact into all our degree programs. Aligned with our strategy, this ensures that our curriculum is relevant and empowers our students to make an impact while they study with us, and makes

certain our graduates are both work-ready and make a positive impact in their communities. Our industry fellows and professors of practice also bring industry relevance into the classroom.

Students are supported through a wide range of mechanisms across the student lifecycle. Our onboarding and peer mentoring programs assist students in their transition to higher education, with dedicated programs supporting international students and equity cohorts. Our comprehensive Student Mental Health Strategy, with its Prepare, Prevent, Respond approach, supports students to flourish and have a positive student experience. UNSW's Academic Success Monitor uses learning analytics to provide early interventions for students at academic risk, encouraging them towards support services to improve success and retention. UNSW Employability leads our student industry engagement strategies through curricular (WIL), co-curricular, and extra-curricular opportunities. All our student success programs have efficacy measures to track impact on student outcomes, with reach and success targets. Since 2024 we have run internal surveys on student belonging to test the efficacy of a wide range of student initiatives, seeing a 12% increase in students' sense of connection to the university from 2024 to 2025. UNSW aims to have at least 75% of undergraduate & postgraduate students positively rating the overall quality of their educational experience through QILT surveys by 2027.

UNSW is committed to providing applicants with accurate and detailed information about the application process and entry requirements for our programs and annually publishes domestic undergraduate admissions transparency data.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

UNSW strives to be one of the world's leading research-intensive institutions, recognised for research excellence, innovation, and the translation of discoveries that address the most pressing challenges of our time, by:

- **Creating a dynamic and diverse research ecosystem that builds collaboration and interdisciplinary partnerships to generate high-quality, impactful research.**

  Underpinned by the UNSW Research Plan and the Indigenous Research Plan, UNSW will leverage large multidisciplinary, trans-institutional teams, supported by significant infrastructure (Health Translation Hub, Integrated Acute Services Building) and a broad range of funding opportunities and government schemes. Expanding international collaborations (Global Research & Impact Program), and the UNSW Missions framework will enable a focused, large-scale, multi-partner approach to delivering societal impact through research.

- **Embedding an innovation culture to drive opportunities for research translation and commercialisation.**

  UNSW will continue to invest in the commercialisation of research outcomes (Barker Street Ventures, Pre-Seed Commercialisation Fund) and foster pathways to translation. The ongoing success of UNSW Founders Startup Accelerators such as Climate 10x and Defence 10x (with increasing expansion in Liverpool), and UNSW's Trailblazer for Recycling and Clean Energy, and Defence Trailblazer has led a paradigm shift in research commercialisation and upskilling of researcher capabilities to engage with industry and build long-term partnerships. In 2025 UNSW placed first in the nation in startups and spinouts for the fourth consecutive year (Survey of Commercialisation Outcomes from Public Research Summary Report), highlighting the societal and translational impact that is cultivated through our research commercialisation efforts.

- **Recruiting and retaining world-leading researchers and high-quality higher degree research (HDR) candidates to drive research quality and impact.**

  New strategic recruitment initiatives (Green Fellowships), ongoing investment in the Scientia Academic, Scientia PhD, and Industry PhD recruitment programs, and continued expansion of integrated training will build a strong, industry-engaged academic workforce. Focus on cultivating Indigenous HDR recruitment and the continued expansion of global engagement programs for HDRs via student mobility and joint PhDs with strategic partners and expanded opportunities for global collaboration. HDR satisfaction is measured through the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) where in 2025 UNSW recorded 86% for overall satisfaction.

- **Strengthening world-class research infrastructure to advance research capacity and translation.**

  UNSW will maintain its leading reputation for cutting-edge, highly specialised research infrastructure, facilities, instrumentation, and expertise with the majority of our research infrastructure – physical, digital and AI augmented – operating under a shared infrastructure model. In 2026, this will focus on advancing the Research Data Experience program to bring better, faster and safer data storage, embedding shared facility principles across all UNSW sites to maintain and strengthen our excellence in experimental research, and advancing our digital research capabilities through the delivery of a GPU roadmap and investment plan.

University-wide KPIs track and measure progress in these initiatives, including Aggregate Ranking of Top Universities; Field Weighted Citation Index at the 75th percentile; total HERDC income per FTE; number of startups supported; number of UNSW Supported Staff-Engaged Spinouts; number of IP Licensing and Option Agreements; number of shared infrastructure facilities; and number of HDR Completions.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

UNSW is committed to driving our student-focussed engagement with industry, government, and community partners, taking a holistic approach to students' personal and professional development. UNSW's approach is embedded across all aspects of university life—through courses, co-curricular experiences, mentoring, and industry engagement—helping students build both practical and future-oriented capabilities. We focus on cultivating a range of skills that prepare graduates to navigate the rapidly changing world:

- Critical thinking and problem-solving, enabling students to analyse complex issues and make informed decisions.
- Creativity and innovation, fostering the generation of new ideas and adaptation to change.
- Communication and collaboration, essential for working effectively across teams, disciplines, and cultures.
- Digital literacy and adaptability, ensuring readiness for emerging technologies and shifting job landscapes.
- Resilience and lifelong learning, encouraging continuous growth and the ability to manage uncertainty.

UNSW's Employability Framework - *Discover – Launch – Grow -* supports students through career coaching, workshops and a range of programs, including discipline-specific and interdisciplinary WIL, AHEGS-accredited co-curricular and extra-curricular programs that focus on societal impact while enhancing students' employability, industry engagement, alumni coaching and mentoring programs, and a range of networking activities. These help students gain confidence, build connections, and understand how to apply their learning in professional contexts, and reflect

UNSW's broader commitment to preparing students for meaningful, sustainable, and future-ready careers in Australia and globally.

Research translation is a key priority for UNSW. Our world leading research & innovation is foundational to this mission, with its focus on real-world application, securing Australia's sovereign capability, and delivering positive social and economic impact in alignment with our institutional strategy. UNSW will maintain its focus on leveraging existing industry partnerships and developing multidisciplinary projects with industry as we continue to embed the culture of innovation and entrepreneurialism, by:

- **Growing interdisciplinary and collaborative industry partnerships**
  Increasing the reach and engagement of the UNSW Entrepreneurial Campus initiative (co-location of a growing number of industry partners) across all UNSW locations; the UNSW RNA Institute (positions UNSW at the forefront of developing and translating novel RNA technologies and treatments); TRaCE and the Defence Trailblazer; the Randwick Health & Innovation Precinct (offering high impact collaborative environments for industry to easily partner with clinicians, academics and innovators); ARENA projects and the NSW Decarbonisation Innovation Hub; TORCH precinct (industry partnerships with Chinese partners) and the UNSW Technology Commercialisation Centre (TCC) in Wuxi, China.

- **Strengthening UNSW's entrepreneurial and translation capabilities and ecosystem**
  Providing an integrated approach to innovation, engagement and enterprise across UNSW through the Industry & Innovation portfolio; creating programs and networking opportunities showcasing the breadth and depth of research translation and technology development emerging from UNSW (Investor Showcase); increasing the capability of researchers to embed translation and commercialisation practices and build partnerships through professional development and Industry PhD recruitment programs; engaging with Australian Government funding opportunities such as Australian Economic Accelerator (AEA) and National Industry PhD programs.

- **Drive strategic initiatives in commercialisation and industry engagement with an international and regional focus**
  Establishing networks with regional neighbours; developing opportunities through the UNSW Defence Research Institute to accelerate the translation of fundamental research into rapid proto-typing and scaled up sovereign manufacturing of Australian capabilities as well as contributing to the AUKUS partnership.

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

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In the presence of:

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SIGNED for and on behalf of

The University of New South Wales

by

Professor Attila Brungs

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