



2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and University of Southern Queensland

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 Southern Queensland's (UniSQ) vision is to be Australia's most transformative university, where ambition, community, creativity and excellence lead to a better tomorrow. Our mission is to support the evolving needs of our students and communities, working together to foster industry-connected learners, create opportunities, and address present and future challenges.

In the Compact period, the University's focus will be on four strategic pillars as outlined in the draft [UniSQ Statement of Strategic Ambition](#):

- Empowering Learning
- Thriving Communities
- Industry and Globally Connected
- Discovery. Creativity. Impact.

The University measures and reports on its strategic performance annually against Key Result Indicators (KRIs). Critical quantitative measures include student population growth and participation, student experience and employment outcomes (QILT surveys), student progression, retention, and completion rates, research quality standards, research income and outputs, international rankings, and a range of diversity and sustainability metrics.

The University has implemented policy, procedures, and processes across the organisation to ensure an appropriate response to national and sector priorities, and will focus in 2025 and 2026 on continuing to address the following important areas:

- *Addressing workforce and skill needs*
The University is addressing this priority area through the development of flexible learning and industry-relevant programs. We partner with our Health and Hospital Service partners as we introduce new allied health programs with a focus on interprofessional practice and rural/regional healthcare and prepare for the introduction of pharmacy in 2027. We continue to transform our undergraduate engineering programs to address industry's changing expectations and needs from this important cohort. We are expanding pathways into our programs through reviewing our Recognition of Prior Learning processes and through partnerships with TAFE, Schools and industry.

- **Ensuring student and staff safety**
UniSQ's [Safer Communities](#) Action Plan is being reviewed to align with the institution-wide strategy to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The University's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy, along with policies like the [WHS Policy](#), reflect a strong commitment to physical and psychological safety. Supported by the Safety Management System, which ensures legislative compliance and continuous improvement, safety and wellbeing are embedded in daily operations through inclusive participation and shared responsibility.
- **Countering foreign interference**
Implementation of the University's approach to [National Security](#), inclusive of due diligence processes, staff education and communication activities in accordance with the Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector.
- **Cyber and data security**
In accordance with the University's [Cyber Security Strategy 2021-2025](#) plan, there will be continued investment in mitigating cyber security threats and vulnerability and maturing our [cyber security](#) posture. A revised Cyber Security Strategy encompassing 2026-2028 is being formulated in partnership with industry peers who are in a similar strategy cycle. This will involve continued expansion and use of external threat intelligence services to implement real-world informed, protective and preventative controls before they are experienced in our environment.
- **Upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom**
The University remains committed to the principles outlined in the [Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy](#) and to continued integration across University business.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

UniSQ's commitment to equity in higher education is demonstrated through its Higher Education Continuity Guarantee Equity Plan, which sets out targeted initiatives to strengthen access, participation, and student success for underrepresented cohorts. Key measures include expanded financial support for low-SES students, greater outreach to regional schools, enhanced transition and wellbeing services, curriculum redesign informed by universal design for learning, and improved transport and facilities. These initiatives are achieving measurable impact: in 2025, First Nations student participation rose to 7%; regional and remote enrolments increased to 46%; and low-SES enrolments remained stable at 30.5%. Satisfaction levels among first-in-family and low-SES students were comparable to, or higher than, the broader student body, while the satisfaction gap for students with disability continued to narrow – reflecting meaningful progress in inclusive support.

Targets

UniSQ is achieving targets identified in its [Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#) such as to increase access and participation rates to 4.5% First Nations students and 46% students from a regional or remote background.

These opportunity targets are complemented by outcomes targets:

- improve the nine-year cohort completion rate for undergraduate students to 60%; and
- improve student retention to 85% and progression rates to 88%. The University's [Education Plan \(2022-2025\)](#) has three key and three enabling strategies that support achievement of these targets.

Achieved by:

- Expanding access through a broad range of equity scholarships and bursaries for students from low-SES, and rural and remote backgrounds and for First Nations students.
- Strengthening partnerships with regional primary and secondary schools to build skills and aspirations among underrepresented cohorts, including regional, rural and remote, and First Nations students.

- Delivering career education programs tailored for local primary and secondary school students, parents and carers, educators and community members from underrepresented groups.
- Assigning dedicated senior executive leadership to foster strong relationships with school principals and their teams.
- Providing inclusive, holistic support throughout the student journey – covering decision-making, transition, health and wellbeing, academic skills, career education, success advising, and peer mentoring to support diverse student needs.
- Offering flexible learning options via the Flexible Academic Calendar, including in pathways programs, designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities, caring responsibilities, and those from low-SES backgrounds.
- Coordinating, monitoring, and aligning widening participation initiatives through collaboration with Queensland universities, Regional University Study Hubs, Suburban University Study Hubs, and internally via UniSQ's Student Success and Retention Committee, underpinned by the new Future Students Strategy.

Measured by:

UniSQ monitors performance through a combination of institutional data and sector-wide instruments, drawing on national surveys (e.g., SES, GOS, GOS-L, ESS) as well as international measures (e.g., ISB, Times Higher Education Impact Rankings). Evaluation is undertaken at multiple levels - University, discipline, program, and course – using both quantitative and qualitative metrics. Benchmarking incorporates disaggregated data for equity groups identified in the HECG Equity Plan, with cohort-specific reporting guiding continuous improvement and targeted support strategies.

UniSQ is adopting the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF) to assess the impact and effectiveness of equity initiatives across the student lifecycle.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

UniSQ embraces innovative, research-informed approaches to learning and teaching. Continuous cycles of course and program improvement are guided by institutional policies and procedures, our academic quality framework, and strategic initiatives as outlined in the [Education Plan \(2022-2025\)](#).

Key priorities for the next 12 months include:

- **Assessment:**
 - Strengthening discipline relevant assessment designs.
 - Improving quality of feedback to students.
 - Facilitating high quality, digital assessment.
 - Ensuring assessments scaffold student learning.
 - Designing assessment to minimise academic integrity risks.
- **First-Year Experience:**
 - Ensuring a strategic approach to first-year initiatives that support transition into and through university.
 - Supporting student success through curriculum.
 - Fostering belonging to the University and program cohort.
 - Enhancing transition support through comprehensive digital orientation including:
 - personalised study support and mentoring plans;
 - early intervention for students showing signs of disengagement (e.g., low LMS access); and
 - continued monitoring of progression following release of results.
- **Professional Learning:** Offering comprehensive academic development that supports staff in the adoption of innovative teaching practices.
 - Implementing professional learning aligned to learning and teaching priorities.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fostering an environment celebrating learning and teaching excellence. • Work-Integrated Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing a framework to guide Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and ensuring WIL is embedded across all programs. ○ Collaborating with industry to co-create meaningful WIL experiences and to adapt programs in response to industry needs. <p>Measured by: UniSQ monitors learning and teaching quality in a variety of ways. Student surveys are used at both the mid- and end- point of most courses to obtain information regarding satisfaction levels and engagement with learning opportunities. The mid-point survey serves as an early intervention tool enabling potential issues to be identified and rectified early in a course. Course Action Plans are completed at the end of a teaching period. These plans triangulate student feedback and other key course metrics (e.g., progression data) and focus of continuous course improvement. Programs undergo annual review, interim review, and comprehensive reviews, where data such as student progression and retention are explicitly examined, as well as admission information, and student outcome metrics.</p> <p>Data related to student satisfaction, student outcomes, and course and program quality assurance is available to staff through institutional dashboards. The University governance processes and Heads of Schools monitor course and program quality and ensure continuous improvement in teaching quality and student outcomes.</p> <p>Improved student progression and success Achieved by: UniSQ continues to strengthen its early intervention strategies to maximise student success. The Student Success Advising team monitors indicators (e.g., LMS activity, academic referrals) to identify students who may benefit from proactive and personalised support. Outreach is delivered via phone, email, and SMS, and tailored to each student's circumstances including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic improvement plans; • referrals to academic, wellbeing, and administrative services; • coaching to navigate the University learning environment; • assistance in building peer networks; and • guidance with Academic Misconduct and Academic Progression processes. <p>Measured by: Increases in progression rates and course completions. Outcomes for equity groups identified in the HECG Equity Plan are measured using the SEHEEF.</p>
<h2>Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation</h2> <p>UniSQ continues to advance its research agenda by striking a balance between fundamental, knowledge-driven inquiry that deepens disciplinary expertise and applied, translatable research that addresses pressing societal challenges. This dual focus ensures that UniSQ contributes to the global body of knowledge while delivering tangible benefits for local, national, and international communities.</p> <p>1. Improving Research and Fostering Innovation Achieved by: UniSQ has recently restructured its organisation to strengthen research and education. This configuration aligns research strengths with emerging opportunities, promotes interdisciplinarity, and streamlines support services. It also positions UniSQ for anticipated funding shifts arising, such as the Strategic Education and Research Development (SERD) Review, and other national reviews and strategies, all expected to prioritise collaboration with industry and other universities. UniSQ is well-placed to respond, with a strong record of industry engagement through initiatives such as the Trailblazer iLaUNCH Hub and SQNNSW Innovation Hub.</p>

Looking ahead, UniSQ will operate through four Research Institutes aligned with its flagship areas, each addressing large-scale problems of societal significance:

- Agriculture, Climate and the Environment
- Health
- Space, Defence and Advanced Technologies
- Thriving Communities and Regional Development

The Institutes will lead University-wide strategies, drive innovation and commercialisation, foster partnerships with end-users towards translatable outcomes and support Research Centres and programs. For example, health research is improving chronic disease management and regional health access; space and defence research is advancing communications and national security; rural and regional development research is enhancing economic resilience; and agricultural and climate research is enabling sustainable land use and adaptation.

Measured by:

Increased proportion of research active academics; quality research outputs per academic; growth in research income.

2. Supporting Research Training

Achieved by:

UniSQ remains committed to developing the next generation of researchers. Early Career Researchers benefit from a Research Skill Development Framework, which focuses on the development of skills for research, management of research, career planning, and researcher self-care. Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students access growing opportunities for industry engagement, supported through industry PhD scholarships. These programs equip candidates with advanced research skills and practical experience, preparing them for careers within and beyond academia.

Measured by:

HDR enrolments and timely completions; growth in HDR industry placements.

3. Fostering Commercialisation and Impact

Achieved by:

UniSQ is expanding its commercialisation capacity. Following the reset of the [Intellectual Property \(IP\) Policy](#), new processes, systems and incentives are encouraging staff to identify IP opportunities and build industry pathways. The aim is to strengthen the IP commercialisation pipeline while increasing HDR placements with innovation-focused organisations.

A defining feature of UniSQ's approach is deep engagement with end-users. Current initiatives include the establishment of innovation precincts with local industry. Designed as collaborative ecosystems, these precincts bring together talent, infrastructure, and resources to foster co-created solutions, accelerate translation into practice, and support regional innovation economies. A key example is UniSQ's [National Cryogenic Electronics Measurement Facility](#) based at the University's Springfield Campus, which is Australia's first industry-accessible facility of its kind.

Measured by:

Growth in strategic industry partnerships; increased IP disclosures and protection procedures; increased Category 3 funding.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

UniSQ partners with industry through mission-aligned collaborations that mobilise the University's expertise to drive economic growth and regional prosperity. Our aim is to make industry engagement the engine of student completions and job creation in priority fields—connecting employers with talent and solutions and serving as a bridge between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) so the workforce can move fluidly between sectors.

To ensure consistency and scale, UniSQ is developing a University-wide Partnership Framework (“Partner of Choice”) to set standards for selecting and stewarding partnerships, codify benefits measurement, and foster strategic, whole-of-University alliances.

Priority 1: Place-based Talent and Service Pathways

We are using our campuses as industry–university collaboration spaces, where workforce demand, supervised practice, future workforce development, innovation and employment are planned together.

- Partners co-design competency profiles and assessments based on emerging needs.
- UniSQ aligns curricula, micro-credentials, and student development to ensure learning translates into verified capability.

This model shortens time to productive employment, accelerates uptake of new practices and technologies, and supports managed growth in our domestic student profile.

Priority 2: Seamless VET–HE Progression

Through our alliance with VET providers, UniSQ has:

- Established guaranteed credit maps and dual-entry pathways.
- Begun exploring co-designed, co-delivered degrees in priority occupations with [TAFE Queensland](#) as part of the [Southern Queensland Education Alliance](#).

This approach reduces time to competence, supports portable recognition, and enables earn-and-learn models that align with the Australian Government’s Tertiary Education Harmonisation agenda and [Jobs and Skills Australia](#) workforce roadmaps.

Priority 3: Industry-Led Capability Uplift

Industry drives capability building through authentic, assessed work:

- Digital Work Integrated Learning (WIL) connects regional and rural Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with student teams working on live projects in Industry 4.0-aligned fields.
- Extended internships embed industry as co-assessor, aligning graduate capability with workplace standards.
- Recognition of prior and concurrent workplace learning allows employees to gain academic credit for their skills.

Examples of UniSQ Partnerships

- Southern Queensland Rural Centre for Health Education Research (SQRCHE) – regional health workforce collaboration with Darling Downs Health, Queensland Health, Local Government Authorities (LGAs), private hospitals and [SQRH](#).
- Ipswich Integrated Health and Community Precinct (IIHCP) – growing supervision capacity and building health education aspiration.
- [Toowoomba Surat Basin Enterprise](#) Memorandum of Understanding – gateway to SME, agriculture and net-zero industries.
- Partnerships with Toowoomba, Ipswich and Springfield Chambers of Commerce.
- Academic partnership with the Ipswich Museum (Queensland Museum Network) – co-designed STEM learning experiences.
- [Charleville Nursing](#) with [South West Hospital and Health Service \(SWHHS\)](#) and [SQRH](#).
- [Southern Queensland Education Alliance](#) – cross-sector collaboration.
- Veterans Cybersecurity Pathway – recognition of service credentials with paid industry placements.
- Professional Services Pathway – paid study-work integration in accounting, mapping workplace learning to credit.

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
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND
by

Professor Karen Nelson

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor

Position

Signature

Date: 11 November 2025

In the presence of:

Rachel Searl

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

In the presence of:

Ms Kathy Pingel

Witness (please print)

Senior Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature