



2025-26 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and University of Tasmania

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 Tasmania Refreshed Strategic Plan](#) sets a long-term horizon to 2050, recognising the urgent transitions Tasmania and the world must make to achieve a sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future. We remain deeply committed to our mission: to be a university for Tasmania, and to make a distinctive contribution from Tasmania to the world. Our strategy identifies five organising priorities where the University has a central role in Tasmania's future: education, health, productivity, climate, and the vital task of nurturing Tasmanian stories in all their forms, grounding us in place and helping us imagine a more hopeful future.

A key element of our mission is to create access to education for our community and beyond. We are taking steps this year to develop options to strengthen our focus on equity cohorts. This will give rise to a further set of initiatives to be delivered in 2025-2026. The Universities Accord Final Report provides for a place-based approach to improving educational access and equity for those who are educationally disadvantaged. As the only university based in Tasmania, we train much of the State's future workforce. We strongly advocate for and invest in our regional campuses, distinctive offerings and fit-for-purpose facilities to promote educational access and participation, and to improve life-long learning and skills development across the State. The extension of the HECG funding is essential to support the University in building on its success in supporting equity students and to ensure we deliver new and expanded initiatives in 2025 as detailed in the section "Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education".

Addressing Tasmanian workforce and skill needs

As the only University in the State, we continue to demonstrate our commitment to serving the workforce and skill needs of Tasmania. Examples include the extension of our full medicine degree into Burnie and Launceston, as well as the continued roll out of the expansion of our course offerings in allied health, which aim to provide the professionals that are so urgently needed in Tasmania. We also directly address skill and capability gaps in Tasmania through the provision of

valuable community services such as a tax clinic and a psychology clinic in both Hobart and Launceston.

Ensuring Student and Staff Safety

The [Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#) sets out our commitment to ensuring a safe and healthy university environment for both students and staff, supported by the [Behaviour Policy](#) and detailed procedures that outline expectations, reporting, and consequences. In 2024 we commenced a [program of work](#) to strengthen our alignment with the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, recognising the increasing expectations of government, students, and the wider community.

A key part of this reform has been the redesign of our complaints and support processes. Through an innovative intake system, we have streamlined access so that students are connected to the right support at the right time. Instead of navigating multiple services or retelling their experiences, students now have a single, trauma-informed point of entry, supported by structured triage to ensure proportionate and timely responses. This approach has reduced duplication, built confidence in the system, and provided a more compassionate experience for students at moments of significant stress.

Looking ahead to 2026, we will be embedding this model as the foundation for our wider approach to safety, wellbeing, and equity. By connecting our intake system with the Gender-Based Violence Action Plan, we will strengthen prevention, early intervention, and crisis response, while ensuring transparency and accountability through regular reporting. This not only aligns UTAS with national policy directions but also demonstrates to our community that we are listening, responding, and building safer campuses.

Upholding Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

Considering the role universities play as places of debate, discussion and the sharing and testing of ideas, policies regarding academic freedom and free speech are a critical element of the governance framework when it comes to creating a safe and respectful community. The University of Tasmania fully subscribes to the principles of the Model Code. The University's entire policy suite was revised in 2020, and the University meets and, in some cases, exceeds the Model Code through its new policies. Our strong commitment to academic freedom and free speech at the University of Tasmania is captured in our [Academic Freedom and Free Speech Policy](#). We will actively protect members of our community exercising their rights to lawful speech, as we have done in the past. Our Vice-Chancellor has given a range of speeches supporting free-speech and our graduation ceremonies now highlight it as a central feature of what constitutes a university.

Countering Foreign Interference

We remain vigilant in countering foreign interference, through development of a Cyber Security Threat and Risk Assessment and an accompanying 3-year roadmap to track progress. This embeds control procedures that allow for the management of incident prevention, which aligns with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner best-practice and with ASIO on due diligence processes. The process also allows implementation of the principle of least privilege deployment process for critical operating systems and the identification of research and IP likely to be of value to foreign partners. We continue to be vigilant and take appropriate measures in relation non-cyber threats.

Cyber and Data Security

Effective management of information and cyber security enables the strategic objectives of the University to be met while managing risks and protecting systems and information from cyber

threats. Our [Data and Information Governance Policy](#) outlines our commitment to responsible risk management, safeguards systems and information, and maximises information value ethically and compliantly while minimising costs and risks associated with holding information.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

The Australian University Accord sets an ambitious target: by 2050, 55% of Australians aged 25 to 34 should hold a higher education qualification, with Tasmania currently at 37%. Much of the increase is expected to be achieved by lifting the number and proportion of students from equity backgrounds participating and succeeding in higher education. There are four key challenges that need to be addressed to achieve the necessary uplift in Tasmania:

- The Scale Challenge: the sheer scale and depth of disadvantage is huge and much larger than other states
- The Propensity Challenge: the propensity to engage with higher education is low and decreasing
- The Capability Challenge: with ~50% adult functional illiteracy and numeracy in Tasmania we can't meet the Accord target without addressing this issue
- The Distribution Challenge: the Tasmanian population, especially the low SES group, is highly dispersed and difficult to target in order to address the above challenges.

Current proposed funding arrangements (such as Needs-based Funding and Fee-Free Uni Ready places) are important measures to address preparedness and support for equity students that are ready to engage with higher education. However, they provide very limited support to address "pre-access" which is needed to address the broader issue of increasing participation, particularly in those populations that currently show little or no propensity to engage with tertiary education. Pre-access is now widely recognised as the critical first stage of the student equity lifecycle, shaping whether aspiration translates into higher education participation.

Pre-access and participation

We propose that the significant challenges to increasing equity participation in Tasmania can be addressed through a pre-access strategy that is based around three key pillars:

Tackling the propensity and scale challenges through interventions across the life course that build aspiration and engagement. This includes:

- Primary School and Parents: building aspiration early amongst children and their families through programs such as the Children's University.
- Secondary School: direct engagement in and partnerships with senior secondary school to deliver programs that extend from in-school and on-campus outreach and engagement to include initiatives such as the Universities Connections Program, UniHubs and the Schools Recommendation Program.
- Adult learners: community engagement with those who have the capability to attend university but who aren't engaging by utilising existing community contact points such as local libraries and job hubs to support a network of education engagement officers, and through ground-breaking initiatives such as the Local Learning Leaders Project.

Tackling the capability and distribution challenges through place-based partnerships that empower communities and build foundational skills. This includes:

- Enhanced pathways and greater access to Study Hubs for those who are less prepared but at least middle school level literacy and numeracy.
- Foundational learning in trusted local settings using existing networks for those without the literacy or numeracy skills needed to engage with traditional pathways programs and who are widely distributed.

Tackling all challenges through a whole of system approach to education reform and a deep partnership between the University, State and TAFE/VET providers to ensure seamless pathways, shared responsibilities and improved educational outcomes across the life course.

To materially increase Tasmanian equity student participation and success, the funding arrangements that are currently proposed as part of the shift in higher education funding need to be redirected and reallocated so that the identified strategies can be successfully implemented, otherwise we are unlikely to see the shift we need in equity participation. We have developed an option to allocate a portion of the Fee Free University Ready (FFUR) funding to pre-access initiatives that are much broader than currently funded university outreach activities (ie those which are funded to an extent through HEPPP and will in future be funded through a small pool of dedicated Outreach Funding).

Student inclusion, retention and success

Once equity students are engaged with University, we have a focus on student inclusion, retention and success to enhance student equity and outcomes. This involves implementing specific initiatives tailored to addressing the needs of under-represented groups in higher education, as well as implementing a range of programs designed to eliminate barriers and foster participation and success.

Expanding Regionally Relevant Delivery

As the cornerstone of our regional access strategy and our Equity Plan, HECG funding has allowed the University to continue to maintain and provide a broad curriculum for regional students at our regional campuses at the Cradle Coast and in Launceston, an amount that is over and above the student revenue that is received for teaching students in these locations. The Cradle Coast and Launceston campuses now offer locally delivered programs in high-demand fields such as Nursing, Medicine, Allied Health, Pharmacy, Psychology, and Law. These campuses provide critical access for regional students who are unable to relocate, particularly those from multi-disadvantaged backgrounds. Regional delivery models demonstrate significantly higher participation and completion rates for equity cohorts compared to national averages.

The regionality of the campuses results in smaller class sizes than larger metropolitan universities and the resulting diseconomy of scale contributes to the ongoing investment required. The nature of the student profile is also more intensive to teach in a way that enables them to reach successful completion, resulting in more teaching hours being invested per student. The requirement for staff to maintain the campuses and travel between campuses also adds to the cost of this investment in regional delivery.

While the additional costs are material, the many benefits which come from providing these regional campuses are far greater. From an economic perspective, the economic return and health benefits just from the additional students that obtain a degree through being able to study locally is over three-times the value of the investment. This is before the economic benefits of having additional staff members and associated economic activity in the regions is considered. The funding is also directly improving access to education for more of the Tasmanian population, particularly those in regional areas that have a higher proportion of equity students.

Enhancing Student Success and Completion

Moving into 2026, we will embed our Universal Design, Inclusion and Student Success Plan as a cornerstone of our academic and student experience agenda. This work recognises that while UTAS performs strongly in supporting many under-represented groups, there remain persistent gaps in completion and success - particularly for students living with disability, neurodiverse students, online learners, part-time students, and those from low SES backgrounds.

To address these inequities, we will adopt a targeted approach to participation, progress, and completion. This includes embedding universal design for learning across the Academic System, redesigning courses with low progression, and strengthening first-year pedagogy to improve retention.

As part of the Universal Design, Inclusion and Student Success Plan we are further enhancing student interventions through the implementation of the Student Retention and Engagement Analytics Platform (StREAM) that will enable early identification of students at risk, in particular equity students (further detail on StREAM is provided in the next section).

To ensure the student voice is captured within improvements to our courses and wider student experiences, we are embedding the Students as Partners Framework at both an institutional and course level.

Complementing the above is a suite of scholarships and bursaries, that aim to help students prepare and succeed in their studies. These scholarships are provided to remove financial barriers and offer assistance with relocation, accommodation, academic support and career guidance, as well as health and wellbeing support.

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

The Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement (SPAЕ) contributes to the acknowledgement and respect of our deep-time Aboriginal culture and history, diverse knowledges and enduring presence. In many ways these define the University's distinctive sense of place and belonging. The SPAЕ is essential in focusing the teaching, learning and research capability of the University of Tasmania on developing Aboriginal social, cultural, intellectual, and economic capacity in Tasmania and across Australia. The next iteration of the SPAЕ will be guided by our Indigenous Charter that was developed by the Indigenous Commission for the University of Tasmania.

Our dedicated Riawunna Centre fosters a culturally welcoming place and aspires to create positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and community. The Riawunna centre provides student services to Indigenous students, improving participation, retention and success through culturally responsive supports.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

The University of Tasmania's strategic plan outlines our commitment to creating distinctive, high-quality courses and student experiences, irrespective of location. As the only university in Tasmania, our commitment to breadth and flexibility as well as campus reach is essential to ensuring we accommodate the diverse requirements of our communities and support our regional economy. In 2025 we are evolving our approach to learning and teaching, taking a systems approach. Our Academic System articulates our approach to curriculum design, course performance and academic development to achieve transformative educational outcomes for every student. In 2025-26 key teaching and learning performance strategies will focus on re-design of our courses to lift performance in a range of student success measures. All strategies outlined in this section will benefit from consistent attention to the equity context in their development and delivery.

Distinctive Offerings that meet Tasmania's Needs

To meet both regional skill-needs and to create equitable opportunity, a breadth of professional courses is needed. The University of Tasmania has developed new, regionally distinctive courses that align to professional need. These courses, such as Marine and Antarctic Sciences in Hobart, Agricultural Science, Allied Health, and Food Innovation in Launceston, and Equipment Design and Technology in Burnie, leverage connection with the environment, proximity to industry and community, as well as offering field trips to unique locations and experiences that can only be found here on the island. Our distinctive curricula also include partnering with industry and other research bodies such as the Australian Antarctic Division and CSIRO which maximise the unique learning opportunities found here.

Evolving our Academic System

Our Academic System is designed to achieve transformative outcomes for students and their communities. We are re-defining how we conceptualise, design and optimise the performance of our courses, with a clear focus on student success. We are currently at or above the sector averages in overall experience (76%) and teaching quality (82%) with ambitions to significantly lift in these areas. Underpinning our approach is: a progressive lift in academic staff capability. Embedding Universal design, development of future focussed graduate capabilities, assurance of learning and embracing the opportunities presented by emerging technologies are essential design elements within our System. Using this approach we will progressively design and re-design courses to lift performance through 2025-26, and we have established a central Learning and Teaching Performance team to drive this work. This team are focussed on enhancing our curriculum design and approval processes, improving course performance through more rigorous quality improvement practices, and lifting academic staff capabilities. Our teams work in a highly integrated approach within a *students as partners* philosophy to achieve success for every student. As part of our Academic System, we have also developed a systematic approach to course portfolio optimisation, to ensure that the workload involved in the delivery of high quality offerings to students is balanced with the capacity of our teaching staff. This has seen a shift in unit availabilities and time allocated to teaching to ensure balance for 2025 and 2026.

Student Retention and Success

As outlined in the section above, the Universal Design, Inclusion and Student Success Plan will be embedded across the University as a forward-looking framework to lift achievement and reduce inequities in retention and completion. Building on our institutional commitment to inclusive design and differentiated support for students, the plan integrates renewed data capability to target cohorts we know do not complete at the same rate as others. A key element of this work is the development of new course dashboards that draw on the full suite of University data to give staff clearer visibility of participation, progression, and outcomes across all student groups. These

dashboards, when combined with enhanced communication strategies and simplified administrative systems, will enable staff to intervene more effectively and provide more consistent, dignified support for students navigating barriers to success.

The implementation of the Student Retention Engagement and Monitoring system (StREAM) adds another critical dimension to this plan. StREAM centralises student engagement data and uses algorithm-driven scores to highlight students at risk of attrition relative to their peers. This enables Academic and Professional staff to view students holistically at the course level, coordinate timely interventions, and record and share support provided across the institution. Early findings from a 2024 trial indicate that interventions informed by StREAM produce a significant retention uplift (+35%) for students successfully contacted. By 2026, the platform will underpin all major student success interventions and be further extended to integrate academic integrity processes, equity initiatives, and targeted outreach. Together, the dashboards and StREAM provide the data foundations for a whole-of-institution, evidence-based approach to embedding universal design, inclusion, and student success to move our undergraduate completion rates to closer to 70% by 2030.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Research Excellence and Impact for and from Tasmania

Forces local and global combine to present Tasmania with a series of very pressing challenges. Through our refreshed Strategic Plan, the University has chosen to make four challenges our organising priorities: education, health, productivity and climate. To add to our priorities, there is a fifth important task, which is to nurture our Tasmanian stories in all their forms to help us understand our past, our current circumstances and imagine our way to a more hopeful future. Each represents a systemic challenge and future transition where we can make a distinctive contribution through integrated research, education and partnerships with government, industry, and communities. This targeted approach is informed by theories of change to provide new knowledge or applying existing knowledge into implementable interventions by our partners for improved societal impact. These interventions are also incorporated into our academic offerings, so our current students who will be part of the future workforce, are better prepared to implement these interventions.

Continuing to undertake purpose-driven and supply-informed research will be key to addressing these challenges and progressing the transitions that we need to see Tasmania make, as well as making national and global contributions in areas of distinctive advantage. Our approach is underpinned by our Research Model which provides strategic guardrails and societal impact pathways to prioritise research that addresses Tasmania's challenges to maximise the community and industry benefit and impact of our research.

The research training of our Higher Degree Research (HDR) students is embedded in the programs and projects of work prioritised via our Research Model and progressively in the Tasmanian transitions, centred around an exceptional student experience and graduate outcomes. Throughout 2025 and 2026 we will continue to embed and strengthen our new HDR framework with key priorities of renewing HDR development programs, strengthening supervisor training and mechanisms to monitor quality of supervision, and expanding opportunities for industry-linked researcher training for HDR students. We will also improve the sustainability of being an HDR student, through initiatives to deepen support for HDR student safety and wellbeing, including deep review of HDR governance and operations against the principles of inclusion, diversity and equity.

We have embedded strategic and operational key performance indicators for research reporting across the University from individual Disciplines and Schools through to University Council. Dashboards have been developed so that all staff are able to view and understand patterns in research performance across the organisation. Metrics tracked include indicators for research excellence (e.g. research income received, grant success rates and quality of research outputs), research impact (e.g. industry partnerships) and HDR performance.

During 2025 we will largely complete the replacement of our research management systems which underpin and enable our Research Model. Our research output and open-access repositories were merged last year and now benefit from technologies like auto-harvesting from external data providers ensuring our research is more widely available and helping us to understand how it is being used.

Innovation and Commercialisation

We seek to enable industry and new enterprises in areas of competitive advantage and opportunity for Tasmania, and will achieve this through an innovation ecosystem, including incubator/accelerator facilities and diverse pathways to raise finance, licence technology to third parties and spinout/start-up companies. To support this endeavour, the University established a separate commercialisation vehicle in the form of a wholly owned subsidiary company, which trades as UTAS Innovation Ventures (InVent) and aims to grow and maximise the impact of university owned intellectual property (IP).

InVent specialises in:

- IP advice and management (e.g. establishment of patents and other protection of IP and ongoing management of the University's patent portfolio).
- Commercial strategy and legal drafting (e.g. working with advisors and industry to identify the optimal path to commercial impact and provision of the necessary associated legal support).
- Research impact skill building (e.g. commercialisation training for selected staff and HDR students working on IP with emerging potential).
- Innovation ecosystem events (e.g. events to raise the profile of commercialisation activities in the University and broader Tasmanian community).
- Enterprise creation (e.g. licencing of IP to external entities, establishment of spin-out companies which own University IP and so on).

Further to managing all licences, the InVent team has recently raised almost \$2m in external cash to further technology licensed to three recent spin-outs in the areas of mining, agriculture and medicine. The two case studies below give illustrative examples of the impact that has been delivered from innovation at UTAS:

AirRater is a free app developed by the University of Tasmania's Menzies Institute for Medical Research that blends local air quality, pollen and heat data with user-reported symptoms to help people manage asthma, hay fever and other lung conditions, experienced by 1 in 5 Australians. During the 2019–20 Black Summer, downloads rose five-fold as the app expanded nationwide; today, more than 65,000 Australians use it, generating citizen-science reports that support health agencies and fire services. Backed by the Australian Government and state health departments, AirRater's recent upgrades (including AQFx smoke forecasting, smoke/photo reporting and symptom logging) improve coverage for communities far from monitors. In 2022, researchers from UTAS and the University of Melbourne joined forces to incorporate AirHealth Pty Ltd, bringing together a suite of innovative apps to provide real-time, localised air quality information. With over

500,000 downloads already, and more than 7,000 5-star reviews, AirHealth is assisting Australians everyday to make informed decisions by tracking their symptoms, identifying potential triggers and managing exposure.

At a time when food and water security are global challenges, ensuring crops are optimally hydrated for yield and quality is critical: Cavicam Pty Ltd seeks to address this global challenge with an innovative plant hydration monitoring platform. Developed by researchers from the Biological Sciences Discipline in the School of Natural Sciences, Cavicam devices capture and process magnified, high-resolution, time-lapse plant organ images to accurately monitor plant hydration. In late 2024, the spinout was announced as one of four national winners of global agtech incubator, Beanstalk Ventures' Drought Resilience Venture Studio, funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund. The team is now investing their prize of \$250,000 into product and market expansion.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

As Tasmania's only university, with a commitment to making Tasmania more prosperous, sustainable and equitable, our engagement strategies are impact driven and focused on long-term partnerships with industry, government, and community to ensure our research, teaching, and innovation efforts are aligned with Tasmania's needs.

We have enduring joint venture industry partnerships in agriculture (Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture - TIA), and fisheries and aquaculture (Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies - IMAS). TIA leads sustainability-focussed research with industry, enabling practical, on-farm adoption of findings that help the sector adapt and remain resilient. IMAS delivers world-class temperate marine research to support sustainable management of Tasmania's marine resources with research on the Maugean skate, flathead fishery and climate engagement conducted in close partnership with government and industry. Our partnerships with the Tasmanian Government - through the Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration Agreement, which was extended in 2022 for an additional ten years, and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Joint Venture Agreement, renewed in 2023 for a further five years - continue to strengthen our commitment to collaborative research and innovation.

We collaborate in health through the Tasmanian Collaboration for Health Improvement (partnered with the Tasmania Department of Health, Primary Health Tasmania and Health Consumers Tasmania) to facilitate the translation of our health research into better health outcomes for Tasmanians. Recent MoUs with the Department of Health and Primary Health Tasmania reaffirm our shared commitment to workforce development, research, and innovation.

Our Strategic Collaboration Agreement with Hydro Tasmania advances the state's renewable energy transition. This partnership focuses on research, workforce development, and community engagement, with priorities including Indigenous perspectives in land and water management, AI-driven innovation, and inclusive sustainability initiatives. This partnership reflects a shared commitment to building a resilient, future-focused Tasmania.

The Australian Maritime College (AMC) engages locally, nationally and globally to serve maritime needs for civil and defence applications, by working closely with the advanced manufacturing sector, which includes the development of the Defence and Maritime Innovation and Design Precinct at our Newnham campus in Launceston.

We are actively participating in the Microcredentials in Higher Education Pilot program, offering six industry-aligned microcredentials in 2025–26. These provide pathways to further study and support

skill development for those already working in specific industries. The Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre has developed free micro-learning packages with industry to support aged care workforce needs. The national DREAM program offers education and mentoring for aged care workers, and new 'Equip Aged Care' modules are being developed in line with current reforms.

We have established the Tasmanian Policy Exchange (TPE) to facilitate timely and coordinated engagement between the University, Tasmanian Government, community and industry on issues central to the State's future. Key areas of engagement and policy advice include the transition to a zero-emissions future, sustainable development of communities and democratic engagement and good governance. Together with our other impact-focused entities, InVent and the Tasmanian Behavioural Lab, these entities enable deep engagement between the University and industry, government, and community partners and collaborate across sectors to co-design and deliver impact pathways, interventions, and programs that translate research into practice, inform policy, and support innovation and commercialisation. Through these partnerships, we ensure our research findings are implemented in ways that generate tangible societal benefit, and that our academic offerings are aligned with evolving industry and community needs.

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 Tasmania
by

Professor Anthony Koutoulis

Full name (please print)

Acting Vice-Chancellor

Position

Signature

In the presence of:

Rachel Searl

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

In the presence of:

Nicola Maree Moles

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature