



2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

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 July 2025, Western Sydney University launched its Strategic Plan, **WESTERN 2030**, outlining our mission to transform communities in Western Sydney through student success and impactful research over the next five years. The plan is structured around **seven strategic priorities**, each with performance metrics and the following initiatives for 2026:

1. Strengthening Student Success

Western will introduce the 'Western How' app initiative to support students during their first 100 days, reshape academic offerings through a **Product Strategy**, and implement a **Teaching Quality Framework** and new surveys. Success will be measured by improved student retention, admissions, increased undergraduate commencements, enhanced student experience, and higher full-time graduation rates.

2. Putting People First

The University will roll out our new **operating model**, launch a **performance excellence framework**, and develop a **leadership program**. Staff engagement will be improved based on insights from the 2025 Staff Culture and Engagement Survey. Key metrics include improved engagement and leadership scores, increased investment in professional development, and growth in academic staff.

3. Leading Indigenous Acceleration

Western will advance the construction of an **Indigenous Centre of Excellence** and implement the **2026–2030 Indigenous Strategy**. Performance indicators include increased numbers of Indigenous academic staff with doctorates, improved Indigenous student retention, and higher representation in domestic and HDR programs.

4. Unlocking Global Impact

To strengthen transnational education (TNE), Western will develop a **financial and governance framework**, pursue **market diversification** (including expansion into India), and enhance **mobility**.

experiences for staff and students. Success will be tracked through new international partnerships, increased global student participation and improved risk ratings.

5. Driving Research and Innovation

A new **Research Strategy** will be implemented to boost research income, output, and global rankings. Performance will be measured by increased research funding, improved international rankings, commercialisation outcomes, and higher rates of on-time PhD completions.

6. Western Sydney

The University will adopt a **full-scope partnership approach** to benefit students, communities, alumni and industry, positioning Western as a first-choice university. Metrics include the number of partnerships offering work and research opportunities, contributions to regional issues, and increased alumni engagement.

7. Securing Sustainability

Western aims to be Australia's first **climate and nature positive university**. Key initiatives include sustainability-focused research, partnerships, and community engagement. Performance will be assessed through commitment to the **Race to Zero**, achieving nature positivity by 2029, strong performance in the **Times Higher Education Impact Rankings**, and improved student understanding of sustainability.

To support delivery, Western has established an **Office of Strategy and Transformation**, which will report progress to the **Board of Trustees**.

Additional 2026 initiatives include implementing a Board-approved **Cybersecurity Strategy** and an updated **Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy**, which now includes **guidelines** for behaviour during protests.

Western conducts **Foreign Interference checks** in line with Commonwealth legislation, as part of a broader ethical research framework that upholds research integrity, Indigenous knowledge, inclusion, and sustainability.

The University remains committed to fostering inclusive, safe, and respectful environments for all students and staff, while advancing infrastructure, sustainability, and student experience initiatives—including purpose-built accommodation and Indigenous leadership.

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

Western Sydney University is deeply committed to widening participation and ensuring that students from under-represented backgrounds can thrive. Two thirds of our students are the first in their family, one in two speaks a language other than English at home, and we have the highest number of low socio-economic students in the nation.

Our mission is to reflect and serve the diverse communities of Greater Western Sydney, creating genuine pathways to higher education and lifelong learning. This is realised through coordinated initiatives spanning outreach, Indigenous education, student support, and equity-focused services.

Western provides multiple entry points into higher education beyond the ATAR. Targeted outreach engages low socio-economic students, First Nations students, Pasifika communities, and refugee and migrant families.

- ***Pathways to Dreaming*** supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students to strengthen cultural pride, raise aspirations, and university preparation.
- ***PATHE (Pasifika Achievement to Higher Education)*** provides mentoring, academic support, and family engagement to lift Pasifika participation.
- ***Fast Forward*** provides low socio-economic high school students with campus experiences, academic workshops and 1-1 guidance to assist students in choosing the right future path.
- Tailored programs for ***refugee and recently arrived migrant communities*** provide information, mentoring, and early transition support.

By 2030, Western aims to lift undergraduate participation from the region to 30% of domestic enrolments (currently 27%) and increase participation of regional and remote students. Progress will be measured through enrolment, participation, retention and completion data across equity cohorts.

The Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education provides culturally safe spaces and tailored support working with the Indigenous Future Students team to deliver outreach and transition programs. Western commits to increasing the proportion of students who are Indigenous by 2030 (target: 3.2% of UG enrolments; 3.8% of Higher Degree Research Student – currently sitting at 2.5% across both areas) and increase Indigenous student retention rates to 78%.

Once enrolled, students are supported through:

- ***Western Success Coaches*** providing holistic, proactive support, linking students with wellbeing, financial, and academic services.
- ***Peer Programs*** strengthen belonging, build confidence, and support transition.
- ***Disability Services*** deliver individual learning adjustments, assistive technologies, accessible course design, and staff training to embed inclusive practice. By 2030, we aim to increase participation of students with disability with at least 85% reporting satisfaction with learning support.
- ***Targeted interventions*** address barriers such as digital access, food insecurity, placement poverty, wellbeing and the balance of study, work, and caring responsibilities.

Western commits to improving overall student retention to 83% by 2030, increasing progression rates for low SES and Indigenous students, and ensuring more students feel a strong sense of belonging (measured by pulse surveys).

Western invests in career development and leadership pathways with initiatives such as ***Earn While You Learn*** and the ***Citizen Scholar Employability Accelerator with Adobe*** create inclusive opportunities to gain paid experience and industry-recognised skills.

With HECG funding, Western will expand its Student Success ecosystem to proactively identify and support students at risk—academically, financially, or in wellbeing. This includes enhanced data analytics, expanded coaching and mentoring, and targeted financial and wellbeing interventions.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

Western is advancing a student-centred approach to learning and teaching, with a strong emphasis on enhancing quality and outcomes for our students via initiatives outlined in WESTERN 2030 including:

- Through our [Engaged Teaching Project](#), we are redesigning the classroom experience to improve learner engagement and overall student satisfaction, focusing on large first year subjects with lower satisfaction and retention. Detailed analysis of SES qualitative responses shaped more collaborative delivery models, creating more engaged learning experiences.

Western's effectiveness is measured through evaluation and analysis of student feedback data. In the 2024 SES results, Teaching Quality and Engagement increased to 80.1%, up +1.7 from 2023, and continuing a three-year upward trend. The work of the ETP is now being scaled up for broader institutional rollout, with targeted attention in 2026 to large first year subjects and subjects with high fail rates.

- The development and implementation across 2025-26 of a new [Teaching Quality Framework](#) (TQF) that provides the University with a practical guide to clarify what constitutes quality teaching and how it can be measured. The WSU TQF will be benchmarked, both nationally and internationally, but will also have distinctively WSU content. Importantly, it will establish clear and consistent institution-wide expectations around teaching quality, will align with recruitment, probation, performance, and promotion criteria, and will enable our best teachers to be acknowledged and rewarded.
- **Redesigned professional development in learning and teaching** aligned with the TQF, underpinned by an expanded team from 2026, building on the strong foundational work already carried out with new and early career colleagues to prioritise whole-of-career development activities.
- In 2026, **streamlining our student feedback mechanisms** by reviewing and redesigning teaching surveys to increase participation and improve the accuracy of teaching quality evaluations.
- An **improved digital learning experience** through the uplift across 2025-26 of our Learning Management System (LMS) to mirror the insights of ETP and offer greater levels of interaction and collaboration. The LMS will also provide an enhanced student experience, with GenAI improving accessibility and interactivity for students. LMS analytics will be used to track student performance and target early interventions for struggling or disengaged students.
- **Developing leading digital and AI literacy, skills, and capabilities** for students with all students and staff having access to AI literacy training from the start of 2026, establishing and scaling partnerships with digital leaders such as [Adobe](#), [Microsoft](#) and AWS to embed certifications and co-design assessments that reflect real-world skills.
- The roll-out across 2026-27 of **comprehensive reset of assessment and feedback strategies**, including how student performance is tracked. 'Assessment that Inspires and Assures Student Learning for Award Integrity', or the 'IA Approach' will deliver security of assessment and assurance of learning in the context of GenAI.

- The introduction in 2026 of a **dynamic, app-based on-boarding and engagement program** (Western 100) designed to enhance overall support for new and continuing students that is timely and personalised. It is core to the University's new approach to lifting retention from 70.6% (2023) to 83% by 2030.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

In WESTERN 2030, Western's research priorities include:

- **Produce research excellence and drive innovation** across the University, accelerating our global reputation.
- **Deliver locally and globally significant research and innovation.**
- **Place research at the heart of our organisational workload** model to produce research leaders.
- **Provide state of the art research infrastructure**, attracting stellar researchers and government and industry partners.
- **Drive entrepreneurship and the startup economy** to grow the regional innovation ecosystem.
- **Be a research partner of choice** for government, industry and end users.

Progress against these priorities is measured through progress against research income, HDR completions, world university rankings, and commercialisation targets.

Our priorities are ambitious, both for our community of researchers and for our communities in industry, government, Western Sydney – and for our growing international partnerships.

Western will meet these priorities through rigorous and bold research that brings researchers and their communities together to solve local and global challenges and currently supports these priorities via:

- **Seeding and supporting innovation networks** that accelerate industry in the region as a trusted partner. Alongside industry acceleration, Western researchers examine the environment, places and cultures that sustain our people's health and wellbeing. Our researchers pursue research encompassing both our economic and social futures.
- **Research training** at Western acknowledges the trade-offs between earnings in the job market and PhD study, and is increasingly industry engaged and collaborative. More of our PhD students will work together in large research projects to ensure advanced career readiness, whether in the academy or industry.
- Beyond our commitment to HDR training, Western supports the development of researchers at all career stages through a comprehensive [Researcher Development Framework](#), ensuring they are equipped to be high-quality, impactful research leaders.

A **Research Strategy** that translates our institutional priorities into action is in development for release and implementation in 2025-26. The Strategy will enable more of Western's **researchers to harness opportunities for income, impact and esteem**, maximising their research time and productivity.

Key strategic initiatives arising under the Research Strategy include:

- **Research Performance Metrics** – simple, relevant, peer comparison performance metrics for researchers will inform our staff how their research activity compares to colleagues within their discipline relative to opportunity.
- **HDR Support** – more HDR candidates will complete their programs on time, experiencing stronger connection to their peers, supervisors and industry across their candidature, through strengthened researcher and supervisor training and earlier off-track detection.
- **Opportunity** – more of our researchers will have the opportunity to develop productive research careers through reduced administrative ‘barriers to entry’; increased incentives to collaborate with established researchers across disciplines; and more effective matching of competitive and non-competitive research income opportunities with researchers.
- **Rankings** – our excellent citation metrics and extensive industry and institutional engagement will be better reflected in our rankings results through targeted dissemination of the University’s research achievements to peer networks and developing deeper international collaborations.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

The University’s vision for Western Sydney’s innovation-driven future is underpinned by deep engagement with industry, locally and globally with the aim to attract and unite students, researchers and industry to drive economic, social, cultural and environmental transformation.

Western’s industry engagement priorities in WESTERN 2030 include:

- Provide **state of the art research infrastructure**, attracting stellar researchers and government and industry partners.
- Drive **entrepreneurship and the startup economy** to grow the regional innovation ecosystem.
- Be a **research partner of choice** for government, industry and end users.
- Forge partnerships that **address industry-specific talent demand challenges** and contribute to Western Sydney’s growth.
- Partner with **industry to co-create immersive and rewarding opportunities** for students.

Our engagement with industry, as well as government and the community, are underpinned by **Unlimited Potential**, Western’s economic strategy for Western Sydney to drive the region’s transformation, guided by the following pillars:

- **Future Industries:** Targeting global markets in advanced manufacturing, space, defence, aerospace, medical technologies, renewable energy, and semiconductors.
- **Future Skills:** Ensuring access to education, reskilling, and training for high-demand, high-paying jobs.
- **Future Communities:** Promoting equity and aligning community aspirations with economic development.

The University partners with industry to deliver **micro-credentials**, professional training, and reskilling programs, creating an **innovation-ready workforce**. Students benefit from **entrepreneurship programs, internships, and co-created curricula**, ensuring their education is directly applicable to industry needs. This includes the **harmonisation of Higher Education (HE)**

and Vocational Education and Training (VET), partnering with TAFE to support lifelong learning and workforce development.

Western's support for industry extends to investment in infrastructure and support for innovation networks. Western's [Launchpad](#) and [Factory of the Future](#) provide start-up/scale-up support for entrepreneurs and founders at the beginning of their innovation careers, and access to rapid prototyping and design kit to help established industry leaders take the next step to Industry 4.0. Our close working relationship with the **Advanced Manufacturing Research Facility** and access to **Western Sydney Airport** enables Western to nurture relationships in areas such as aerospace and defence. We work in partnership with primes and SMEs to maximise opportunities for Research & Development in the ARC's Industrial Transformation Research and CRC programs.

Western remains focused on **equity and inclusion**, supporting industry of all sizes to ensure their workforces reflect the diversity of our community in Western Sydney.

To deliver on our vision, Western has established the **Division of Western Sydney and External Engagement** as its outward-facing hub, responsible for building and sustaining partnerships that underpin the University's impact. Western has adopted a full-scope approach to partnerships, creating a single point-of-entry for our partners via the Division.

Our **Strategic Partnerships Strategy** fosters purposeful collaboration with industry, government, and community to drive innovation, research translation, and workforce development across identified future industries. Supported by the University's **Government Relations Strategy**, our partnerships align with government priorities and regional investment, including the Western Sydney Aerotropolis and Bradfield City Centre. This integrated approach ensures industry engagement is strategic, coordinated, and impactful, positioning the University as a catalyst for regional growth and a key contributor to Australia's innovation and skills agenda.

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
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by

Distinguished Professor George Williams AO

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Vice-Chancellor and President

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In the presence of:

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Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

In the presence of:

Kaitlyn Maucort

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