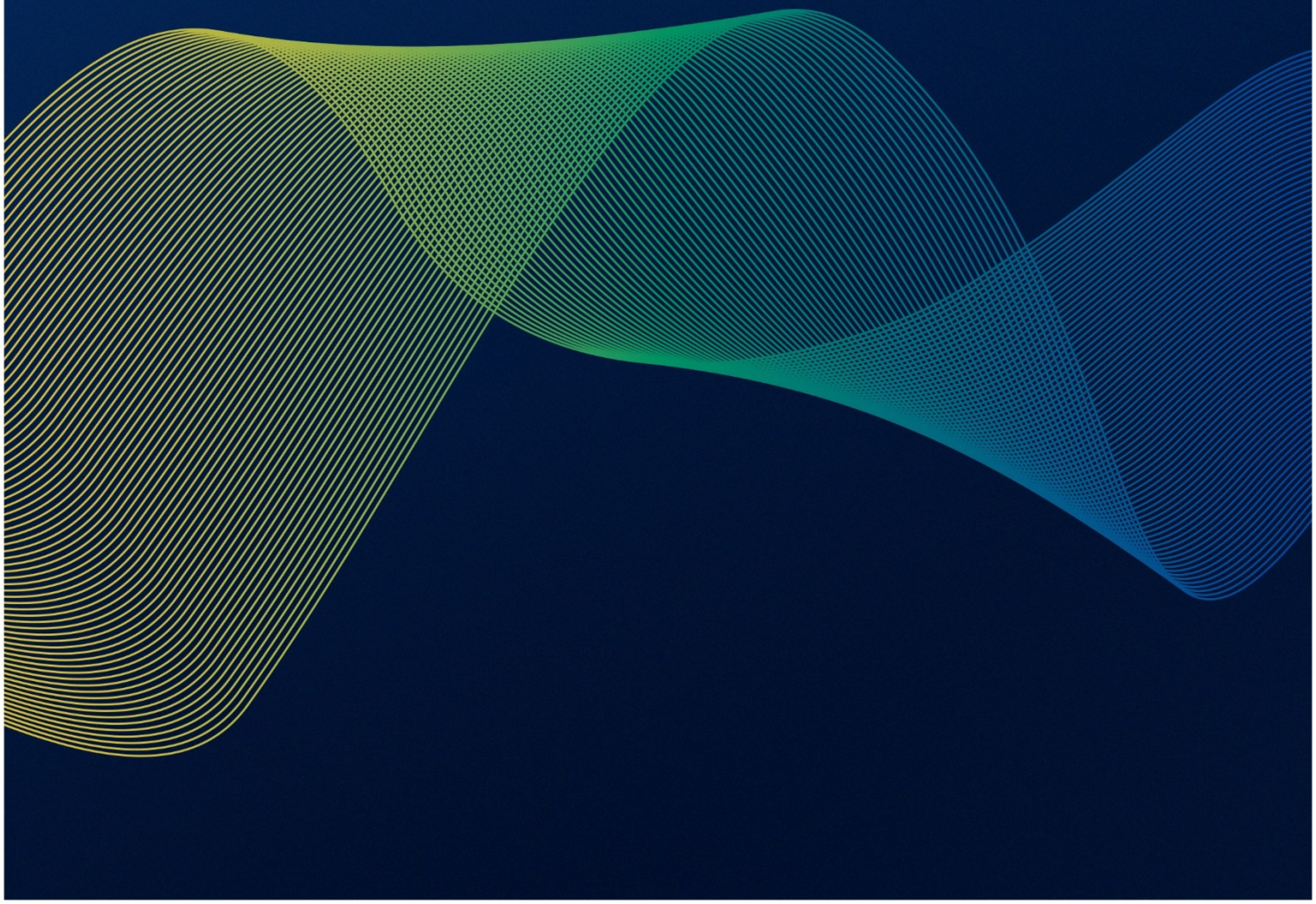
Australian Government

ATEC
Australian Tertiary Education Commission

Charles Sturt University

2027 mission based compact between the ATEC and Charles Sturt University



Preface

This mission based compact is established between the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and Charles Sturt University in accordance with the *Universities Accord (Australian Tertiary Education Commission) Act 2026* (ATEC Act). This mission based compact highlights the significant contributions Charles Sturt University will make to the priorities outlined in the ATEC's interim Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP) as well as how it will achieve its own strategic goals, advance its mission, and deliver outcomes for its students and local community.

Following good faith negotiation, the form and terms of this mission based compact have been determined by the ATEC with Charles Sturt University. In determining these matters, the ATEC has considered the strategic priorities and outcomes set out in the interim SSP, the purpose of compacts as set out in section 28 of the ATEC Act, and Charles Sturt University's goals, missions and strategic plan, geographic location and local community, as well as the effect (if any) the proposed terms may have on Charles Sturt University's academic freedom.

The terms of this compact are set out in section 2 and 3 of this document, and include Charles Sturt University's delivery of the commitments set out in that section.

The ATEC must assess Charles Sturt University's outcomes against the terms of this compact at least once per calendar year. For the purposes of paragraph 29(4)(b) of the ATEC Act, the ATEC's assessment methodology for this compact will require Charles Sturt University to demonstrate it has made **reasonable efforts** to progress the agreed terms of the compact. Assessment is proposed to occur during 2028.

Assessment will focus on the extent to which providers have actively progressed commitments, recognising that full attainment of all outcomes may not be achievable in all instances. In considering whether reasonable efforts have been made, the ATEC will take into account:

- the actions undertaken by Charles Sturt University to progress its commitments, including relevant steps, initiatives, activities, or planning work aimed at achieving the intended outcomes; and
- any factors it is aware of that are reasonably outside Charles Sturt University's control that may have affected its ability to deliver the commitments set out in the compact.

In making an assessment, the ATEC may require Charles Sturt University to provide relevant information consistent with subsection 30(2) of the ATEC Act.

The ATEC may conduct annual check-in meetings with Charles Sturt University as needed, to discuss Charles Sturt University's progress towards meeting the terms of this compact. If Charles Sturt University has any concerns about their ability to meet the agreed terms of this compact, including as a result of matters reasonably outside Charles Sturt University's control, Charles Sturt University agrees to inform the ATEC as soon as possible. Any amendments to the compact terms may be made with mutual agreement of the parties.

As set out in section 30-45 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and section 46D(2) of the ATEC Act, assessment against the terms of this compact must be taken into account by the ATEC in making decisions on domestic and international student place allocations in 2028, helping to shape a high-performing, diverse higher education system.

In line with the ATEC Act, this mission based compact will be published on the ATEC's website within 28 days after the compact is entered into. It is the responsibility of the ATEC to ensure that the information in this compact is up to date.

This mission based compact is in effect from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2027, unless varied or terminated earlier.

Contents

Preface **2**

Section 1: Context **4**

Mission statement 4

Enrolment strategy and priorities 5

Section 2: Performance domains **7**

National, State/territory and regional priorities 7

First Nations 9

Equity 11

Quality teaching 13

Joined-up tertiary system 14

Research 16

Section 3: Course and campus changes **18**

Section 1: Context

Mission statement

Our mission is to expand opportunity, participation and success in tertiary education for the regional communities and cohorts we serve, particularly students from low socio-economic backgrounds, First Nations peoples, first in family, and learners from regional, rural and remote Australia. As Australia's largest regional university our purpose is deeply grounded in place, equity and social responsibility, and is reflected in who we enrol and graduate.

Guided by our ethos Yindyamarra Winhanganha – to respectfully live well in a world worth living in – Charles Sturt has a long-standing and demonstrable commitment to widening higher education participation. Our focus on access and inclusion has long been central to our identity. We proudly deliver education at scale to students historically under-represented in tertiary study through flexible learning models, geographically distributed campuses, and digitally enabled delivery that meets learners where they are.

This commitment is embedded in the Charles Sturt University Strategy 2030, which articulates our ambition to remain Australia's leading regional university, representing and empowering our communities. The strategy positions students at its core, emphasising inclusive, industry-informed education, strong pathways into university, and a whole-of-institution responsibility for student success. Our research focus, comprehensive course profile, campus footprint across regional NSW, and student support models are intentionally aligned to the needs of regional Australia, and are underpinned by a culture that values access, persistence and completion.

Charles Sturt's impact extends beyond participation to long-term community outcomes. The national leader in graduate employment, we shape regional workforce development, delivering a comprehensive course profile that educates the teachers, nurses, doctors, business and IT leaders, veterinarians, dentists and allied health professionals that regional communities rely on. Notably, 82% of our graduates from the regions go on to live and work in regional Australia, reinforcing the effectiveness of our place-based mission and the return on investment in regional higher education. This enduring connection between education, employment and place is a defining feature of our contribution.

Our research activity further contributes to regional development through innovation, industry partnerships and the creation of new knowledge that addresses regional and national challenges.

Deep institutional capability in evaluating and improving equity outcomes is supported by nationally recognised expertise in widening participation research and evidence-based practice. We continuously refine and scale our approach to deliver growth in participation alongside strong educational quality and outcomes. As one example, domestic undergraduate retention improved by 4 percentage points (pp) from 2020/21 to 2023/24 as we rolled out targeted retention strategies, and our 2025 unverified data indicates a further 2pp improvement. This is noteworthy given most of our students are from cohorts at higher risk of attrition.

Delivering on our mission is evidenced in sustained improvements also across other key student metrics, including a 2.8pp increase in QILT overall educational experience over two years (now 6th ranked public university nationally). Together, our strategy, performance and place-based mission deliver meaningful participation gains and graduate outcomes for under-represented cohorts, while strengthening growth in regional communities.

Enrolment strategy and priorities

Our commitment to educating the graduates our regions need is underpinned by an ethical and inclusive approach, transparent and consistent decision-making, policy aligned with regulatory and accreditation requirements, and flexible delivery of high-quality education centred on students' needs.

We are focused on challenges facing our growing communities including shortages of critical professionals in health, education and social services, climate change impacts and Australia's growing needs from our land and water systems. Therefore, we deliver a comprehensive course profile essential to regional Australia, including courses insufficiently funded to cover teaching and infrastructure costs in a regional context, including veterinary science, dentistry, and medicine.

Student mix

We recognise the societal, financial sustainability and educational benefits of a diverse student mix.

Table 1: CSU headcount from 2022-2026

Headcount	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 year to date (YTD)
All students	36,766	34,899	35,140	36,669	In progress

We will maintain a mix of funding sources in 2027, meet Commonwealth Grants Scheme (CGS) demand in our footprint, manage postgraduate CGS load in line with our core mission, and take steps to grow Fee-Free Uni Ready numbers from 2028 onwards. Employer Reserved funding will drop as NSW Policing courses end.

Table 2: Total EFTSL by fund source, 2022-2026

Fund source	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 (YTD)
CGS	69.5%	73.8%	74.5%	72.7%	73.0%
Employer Reserved	9.6%	7.7%	6.7%	8.1%	6.2%
Fee paying domestic	8.8%	6.6%	5.9%	4.6%	3.2%
Fee paying overseas	11.2%	11.0%	12.1%	13.9%	16.8%
Research Training Program	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.6%	0.7%

Table 3: Total Equivalent Full-time Student Load (EFTSL) by course level, 2022-2026

Course level	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 (YTD)
Undergraduate EFTSL	77.7%	79.2%	80.1%	80.1%	81.2%
Postgraduate EFTSL	19.3%	18.7%	17.9%	18.1%	18.0%
Non award EFTSL	3.0%	2.2%	2.1%	1.9%	0.8%

We have long provided comprehensive educational opportunities for under-represented cohorts as outlined in our mission statement. Approximately 85% of our domestic undergraduate students belong to these cohorts – one of the most diverse student profiles in the sector, requiring ongoing targeted investment and support to sustain progress and completion success.

Table 4: Domestic undergraduate headcount, % by cohort, 2022-2026

Equity group	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 (YTD)
Australian First Nations	4.3%	4.5%	4.8%	4.7%	5.0%
Low SES	26.8%	27.6%	28.3%	-	-
First in family	54.0%	53.1%	52.9%	51.8%	51.0%
Regional and remote	49.2%	50.2%	50.8%	50.9%	53.6%
VET basis of admission	33.5%	36.6%	38.2%	38.9%	38.6%

Course mix

To make education accessible and to deliver the graduates our regions rely on, we will continue to provide a comprehensive course mix centred on regional workforce needs, while targeting national, state and regional priorities: Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies; Education; Society and Culture; and Health.

Table 5: Total enrolments by broad Field of Education (FoE), 2022-2026

Course broad FoE	2022	2023	2024	2025
(00) Non-Award course	490	284	227	156
(01) Natural and Physical Sciences	1,091	1,080	1,117	1,210
(02) Information Technology	2,157	1,944	1,770	1,721
(03) Engineering and Related Technologies	155	159	173	199
(05) Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	1,664	1,678	1,661	1,738
(06) Health	7,843	8,337	8,749	9,477
(07) Education	8,048	7,376	8,067	7,324
(08) Management and Commerce	4,330	4,020	3,802	4,171
(09) Society and Culture	10,665	9,767	9,318	9,327
(10) Creative Arts	323	220	154	114
(12) Mixed Field Programmes	-	-	102	1,232
Unknown Field of Education	-	34	-	-
Grand total	**36,766**	**34,899**	**35,140**	**36,669**

The phase-out of NSW Policing courses decreases domestic undergraduate enrolments in Society and Culture in 2027.

Location and campuses

We maintain six main campuses (Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga), which administer 78.7% of our EFTSL, with 13.0% from domestic partner and specialist campuses, and 8.3% offshore students.

Population trends and demand

Our enrolment calculations include NSW projected population growth of 1.1%. In addition, we seek to contribute to the Accord ambition of 80% national participation by 2050 and initially to achieve parity for regional and remote students with metropolitan students by 2037. This would require 2pp growth/annum in these cohorts and necessitates additional enrolment of 1pp/annum.

Course delivery modes

Our course delivery involves a mix of on-campus, online and mixed modes.

Table 6: Total EFTSL by course attendance mode

Course **a**ttendance **m**ode	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 (YTD)
Internal	21.5%	21.1%	22.4%	24.4%	22.0%
Mixed mode	23.5%	23.3%	20.8%	21.0%	21.2%
Online	55.0%	55.6%	56.8%	54.6%	56.0%

International education

4.5% of our total student load is onshore international (~20% pre-pandemic) and 1,775 allocated New Overseas Student Commencement (NOSC) (2,994 in 2019). Our focus is maximising the use of this allocation, adapting our targeted future state of 2,650 NOSC by 2029 with a balanced regional and metro profile if needed. No country constitutes more than 40% of enrolments. We seek to diversify further to reduce our risk, with a focus on transnational education expansion, including a potential new campus in Southeast Asia. We have excess regional student accommodation and support students to find suitable accommodation at our metro campuses, including purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA).

Section 2: Performance domains

National, State/territory and regional priorities

A tertiary education system which meets Australia's current and future skills and knowledge needs

Vision

Charles Sturt will strengthen Australia's skilled workforce and regional capability by increasing enrolments in four broad fields of education (BFOE): Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies, Health, Education, and Society and Culture.

Grounded in our regional mission and strong partnerships with industry, government, VET providers and our communities, we align enrolments, course design and delivery to regional, state and national priorities. Consistent with tertiary harmonisation ambitions and NSW's strategic priorities, we are prioritising implementation of VET pathways and credit recognition; and our listed BFOEs target critical workforce shortages, including skilled agriculture and social work. Our responsible integration of artificial intelligence ensures graduates are workforce-ready.

Action

Skills, workforce development and priority fields of education

Charles Sturt is implementing a coordinated program of course development and partnership-based delivery across targeted courses within BFOE aligned to state and national priorities. The fields are Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies; Health; Education; and Society and Culture.

We continue to target growth in these fields with the intention of meeting demand, improving on our highest domestic bachelor retention and success rates in two decades, and increasing completion rates, with a particular focus on regional, First Nations and low SES students – the equity outcomes our State and country need.

Consistent with ATEC's interim statement of strategic priorities, the NSW Higher Education Strategy 2025-29 and NSW Skills Plan 2024-28, we will continue to expand harmonisation and VET credit recognition to facilitate seamless student transition across the tertiary sector.

Specific actions include:

- **Student growth:** Targeted growth will be supported through strengthened pipelines, including schools engagement, enabling pathways and expanded entry through VET and Connected Pathways programs aligned to regional workforce needs.
- **Course profile:** Course offerings in priority fields are regularly reviewed and refreshed to ensure alignment with industry demand and emerging workforce requirements. This includes the continued delivery of critical but high-cost disciplines such as veterinary science, teaching and nursing.
- **Partnerships:** Industry partnerships continue to be embedded in course design, professional placements and work-integrated learning, ensuring graduates are job-ready and regionally connected.

AI: development of AI in education and research strategy

We are developing an AI Education and Research Strategy that will position us as a leading voice in the sector on the responsible integration of artificial intelligence in higher education. A dedicated Academic Lead (AI) will drive engagement, while an institution-wide assessment redesign project will ensure that judgments about student learning remain robust, secure, and trustworthy.

Staff AI capability uplift is supported through a tiered professional development program, with Foundational AI Critical Literacies and Applied Critical AI Literacies modules already live, alongside a central AI hub. An AI Community of Practice and an AI Academic Working Party sustain ongoing engagement with emerging pedagogical, integrity, and workforce challenges across the institution.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
05 Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	1,507	1,507	1,634 in 2031
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	86.38%	87.88%	88.88% in 2031
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	75.92%	76.32%	76.72% in 2031
06 Health				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	7,623	Achieve +58 EFTSL priority growth in B Nursing	8,263 in 2031
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	90.71%	92.21%	93.21% in 2031
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	76.40%	77.40%	78.40% in 2031
07 Education				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	5,067	5,168	5,602 in 2031
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	83.51%	85.01%	86.01% in 2031
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	75.82%	76.22%	76.62% in 2031
09 Society and Culture				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	6,145	5,673 (impacted by School of Policing phase out)	6,149 in 2031 (8.4% growth on 2027)
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	87.30%	88.80%	89.80% in 2031
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	76.06%	77.06%	78.06% in 2031

Indicators are for the domestic undergraduate student cohort. Success rate includes both commencing and continuing students.

First Nations

First Nations leadership, access, participation and success

Vision

We consistently maintain one of the highest First Nations student loads – 5.2% of our domestic undergraduate, and 5.3% of domestic Higher Degree by Research (HDR) – among Australian universities and are proud to be a university of choice for First Nations students.

We will further empower First Nations students to succeed from higher education aspiration to enrolment, retention, completion and employment, through culturally safe pathways, targeted support to aid the transition into study and research, and building career readiness. We will foster a thriving, culturally safe learning and research environment that honours First Nations knowledges, supports retention, enables student success, and contributes to social cohesion.

Action

Recent years' efforts have driven strong results, and notably for the first time, our 2025 progress rate for First Nations on-campus students matched that of non-First Nations students. We are positively contributing to outcome six of the National Agreement on Closing The Gap: students reach their full potential through further education pathways.

Our 2026-28 First Nations Strategic Plan continues to embed First Nations priorities into core University business. Actions include:

- **Building aspiration and participation** among regional First Nations school students through our Deadly Pathways Festivals; while our First Nations Direct Entry Programs continue to provide a supported entry option, with customised support for VET pathway students.
- Our **First Nations Student Connect** network provides culturally safe services, referrals, and peer connection. Services include content-specific tutors, advice and advocacy, personalised plans, connection sessions on-campus and online, academic skills advice, wellbeing support, scholarships, financial assistance, library services, accessibility and inclusion services, and counselling. These supports enhance cultural safety, successful transition, retention, completion and employment outcomes.
- **First Nations researchers:** our successful undergraduate entry model will be adapted for HDR, identifying and mentoring future researchers, and fostering inclusive environments that support success at every stage.
- **First Nations Knowledge:** we are embedding First Nations knowledges, perspectives and pedagogies across more courses, maintaining our culturally safe learning environments and developing inclusive graduates with strong cultural capability. First Nations-led research will be expanded, underpinned by ethical governance aligned with AIATSIS and UNDRIP, and guided by Indigenous Data Sovereignty and ICIP principles.

We have 2 First Nations members of University Council, and a quarterly First Nations Focused Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meeting where the agenda is set by our Pro Vice-Chancellor First Nations Strategy. This ELT brings First Nations staff into our central decision-making body for all significant First Nations decisions. First Nations people play essential roles in internal and external mechanisms such as Indigenous Student Succes Program (ISSP) governance, an Indigenous Board of Studies, First Nations Student Connect management, and our Regional Consultative Committees. We collaborate with community-led bodies on self-determined service delivery and resourcing decisions. Over 2027-2028 we will strengthen First Nations involvement in operational decisions concerning First Nations staff and students, including Needs-based Funding allocation.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
First Nations total enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	1,058	1,070	1,160 by 2031
First Nations success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	81.28%	82.78% Deliver support through First Nations Student Connect network	83.78% in 2031
First Nations retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	72.61%	73.01% Deliver support through First Nations Student Connect network	73.41% in 2031

Indicators are for the domestic undergraduate student cohort. Success rate includes both commencing and continuing students.

Equity

Increasing access, participation and attainment of under-represented groups and priority cohorts

Vision

Charles Sturt will maintain and strengthen our position as Australia's leading regional university and the sector's exemplar for equity participation and success, including being the largest provider of higher education to domestic undergraduate regional and remote students. We will continue to significantly exceed population parity for key equity cohorts (including First Nations, Regional and Remote) and maintain low SES representation above the sector average for domestic undergraduate students. Our focus is building on the recent strong gains in retention and success outcomes, and continually improving student success at scale through inclusive, culturally safe, whole-of-institution practice.

Action

To sustain our sector-leading performance, Charles Sturt will focus on building on high levels of participation, success and outcomes for our equity cohort, particularly First Nations students, students from regional and remote backgrounds, low SES groups, and students with disability.

Specific actions to be undertaken include:

- **Aspiration:** Participation will be increased through targeted outreach and community engagement across regional and remote Australia, supporting aspiration and readiness for tertiary education. Our comprehensive high school program includes visits to schools, and schools attending campus to experience university life.
- **Accessibility:** Non-traditional channels to study at Charles Sturt include our Charles Sturt Advantage early offer program, special consideration access schemes, enabling courses, First Nations Direct Entry Program, and a Science, Technology and Health Direct Entry Program. Our Pathways Framework supports the transition of First Nations and TAFE students. We will continue to attract and support students through scholarships to low SES students and to assist students to study at our campuses.
- **Pathways:** We will leverage our well-established commitment to preparatory pathways, including enabling programs and transition support, ensuring students from diverse backgrounds are well-prepared for study. These initiatives are expected to increase enrolments from equity cohorts while supporting improved readiness and early-stage success.
- **Student success:** To build on the strong retention and completion outcomes we have built over the past few years, currently at historically high levels, we will continue to embed a whole-of-institution, student-centred support model. This includes proactive academic support, culturally safe and inclusive practice, and targeted interventions at key transition points such as first year and placement-intensive stages. These programs require significant financial and resource commitment, including from Needs-based Funding where appropriate, to deliver the expected results: sustained high retention rates across all cohorts, with additional benefits for students with disability and those from low SES backgrounds.

We will continue to evaluate and refine our equity initiatives using evidence-based approaches, ensuring clear alignment between actions and measurable outcomes across enrolment, success and retention indicators. Where actions are designed to support specific cohorts, this will be explicitly monitored to improve system-wide accountability and inform scalable best practice.

Measure

Indicator	Cohort	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Total enrolments	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2025	2,462	2,511	2,722 in 2031
Total enrolments	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2025	6,352	Deliver scholarships targeted to low SES students	6,998 in 2031
Total enrolments	Regional	HESC – Verified 2025	11,355	11,471	12,434 in 2031
Total enrolments	Remote	HESC – Verified 2025	271	276	299 in 2031
Success	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	81.63%	83.13%	84.13% in 2031
Success	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	84.74%	86.24%	87.24% in 2031
Success	Regional	HESC – Verified 2024	87.25%	88.75%	89.75% in 2031
Success	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	83.97%	85.47%	86.47% in 2031
Retention	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	74.18%	74.58%	75.58% in 2031
Retention	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	74.67%	75.07%	75.47% in 2031
Retention	Regional	HESC – Verified 2024	76.69%	77.69%	78.69% in 2031
Retention	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	73.64%	74.64%	75.64% in 2031

Indicators are for the domestic undergraduate student cohort. Success rate includes both commencing and continuing students.

Quality teaching

Raising the quality and recognition of higher education teaching

Vision

We deliver high-quality, professionally recognised teaching that responds to diverse student needs and the Generative AI environment. Our vision is that every student experiences consistent, evidenced, and student-centred learning across all modes and courses. Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, we proactively design and deliver flexible learning experiences that reduce barriers and support multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, ensuring equitable access and participation for all students. Through implementing professional learning, new engagement models, a contemporary learning management system, supervised assessment, and a transition to course-level assessment, we will demonstrate continuous improvement in teaching quality and graduate outcomes.

Action

Charles Sturt is committed to supporting ongoing professional learning through a coordinated suite of professional learning initiatives via our Teaching Academy, supporting academics at every stage of their career to enhance teaching quality.

- The 'Foundations of Learning and Teaching at Charles Sturt' program is undertaken by all continuing and fixed-term academics upon commencement. Through this 30-hour program, participants are supported by dedicated learning coaches to build capacity in learning and teaching practice. We will maintain our commitment to achieve a 100% completion rate among eligible staff. This is supplemented by additional PD modules in learning and teaching, including in Generative AI.
- Scholarly activity is embedded within academic practice through the annual Performance Review process. Academic staff establish scholarly activity goals that support the ongoing development of their learning and teaching scholarship.
- Recognition and reward of teaching excellence is supported through targeted development opportunities and internal grants programs. Our annual Educator Development Grant schemes provide funding and support for initiatives that advance teaching practice. These initiatives also support staff to gain internal and external recognition including through nationally and internationally recognised programs such as Advance HE Fellowships. We are recording baseline academic uptake of professional development programs as a performance metric for 2028 onwards.
- Building capability for future-focused learning models will be a key priority in 2027. Charles Sturt will expand its professional learning program to support implementation of the Models of Engagement and Assessment Practices (MEA) strategic project. The program will provide targeted professional learning to support academics in delivering high-quality student experience across our three learning models: On-Campus, Online and Mixed mode.

Charles Sturt will continue to enhance teaching quality through technology-enabled learning, curriculum renewal, and by strengthened assurance of learning. Building on the 2024 implementation of Brightspace, we will continue to uplift digital teaching capability while progressing the MEA initiative, which will transition all courses to one of three delivery models from 2027. In response to the evolving AI environment, we are also embedding supervised assessment and advancing course-level assurance of learning through capstone experiences and systematic mapping of assessments to Course Learning Outcomes.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Overall educational experience	QILT SES – Verified 2025	79.8%	80.0% Implement Models of Engagement and Assessment Practices Transition Group 1 (first half 2027)	N/A (replacing with new internal metric for 2028-2031)

Joined-up tertiary system

Strengthening collaboration and coordination between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education

Vision

Charles Sturt's successful pathways experience over decades will help lead the development of the joined-up tertiary system Australia needs: one where VET and university are seamlessly connected in a practical workforce journey. Credit arrangements and a guaranteed place at university will provide the practical foundation, with ongoing focus on building students' confidence and belonging through customised wraparound support.

We will sustain the high percentage of students admitted on a bases of admission (BOA) of a VET qualification and the proportion with prior course credit. We will expand our VET BOA courses in health and education to address regional workforce gaps.

Action

For over 2 decades, VET has been the BOA for over 20% of our annual domestic undergraduate commencing headcount, and to date in 2025 accounts for 35%.

Our partnerships and programs span from traditional pathways and credit recognition, to sector leading course offerings, including our integrated Bachelor of Social Work with TAFE NSW, where students are co-enrolled for the first two years and graduate with both a Diploma of Community Services and their bachelor qualification.

Into 2027, we will maintain our existing strong pathway programs and support that has sustained our sector high success at enrolling and graduating VET entry students.

Our new Connected Pathways Program, a collaboration with TAFE NSW, is our next step in further strengthen access and achievement by systematising our coordinated admissions, practical transition support and locked-in credit positions.

Supported by the government's Needs-based Funding scheme in 2026, Connected Pathways initially focuses on the three largest disciplines and workforce priorities in regional areas: teacher education, nursing and social work. The student proposition remains clear: build on existing TAFE NSW experience, transition into university with confidence, receive recognition for prior learning, and access dedicated support to navigate the move.

Under Connected Pathways, students will participate in an immersive transition program where they will meet others on the same pathway, build confidence, and begin navigating key steps including early conditional offers, guaranteed entry from their TAFE course, and available scholarship opportunities.

Dedicated pathway advisers have been employed as the central liaison between TAFE, Charles Sturt and students, ensuring a single, clear and integrated pathway. The key difference is that we are not focusing on credit alone, instead we offer a wraparound model that provides academic preparation, assessment literacy, placement guidance, wellbeing support, student connection and regional advice.

Connected Pathways is focused on strengthening regional workforce supply consistent with NSW priorities, which is why disciplines have been deliberately selected in partnership with TAFE to address workforce shortages. Being place based, we will use regional campuses, TAFE NSW locations, placement partners and industry relationships to show how a student can move from vocational study to degree completion to local employment.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Percentage of domestic bachelor students admitted on the basis of VET with >= 1 EFTSL credit	CSU supplied using HESC data – 2025	54.30%	50.00% Implement Connected Pathways Program in 2027	55.00% in 2031
Domestic students admitted to a bachelor course on the basis of VET	CSU supplied using HESC data – 2025	7,786	7,805 Implement Connected Pathways Program in 2027	8,461 in 2031

Research

Sustaining national capability and supporting innovation through research and research training

Vision

Charles Sturt is committed to partnering for impact by leveraging our research strengths in agriculture, environment, water, health, and education to deliver tangible benefits for our regions and beyond. By fostering a collaborative culture across disciplines and with external partners, we aim to translate research into practical solutions that benefit industry, government, and communities. This approach builds regional capability, strengthens community outcomes, and ensures our research is inclusive, impactful, and aligned with real-world challenges. An important component is the development, retention and completions of our HDR students, through targeted support and supervision.

Action

Research impact

Our research priorities are anchored in solving regional challenges with global implications, aligned with our priority strengths.

The Gulbali Institute for Agriculture, Water and Environment, together with the School of Agricultural, Environmental and Veterinary Sciences, advances outcomes in food security, sustainable agriculture, water management, drought resilience, digital farming and biosecurity.

The Rural Health Research Institute are directly improving rural and regional health and wellbeing, with a stronger focus on industry- and consumer-led research and partnerships.

The AI and Cyber Futures Centre has aligned research with priorities in agriculture technology, environment and digital health, and collaborations in cybersecurity, automation and emerging technologies.

AgriPark accelerates research translation, co-location and commercialisation in Agriculture through collaboration with faculties, institutes, industry, Cooperative Research Centres, and Research and Development Corporations.

Research training

Building future researchers is central to our ongoing success. Our early- and mid-career researchers participate in comprehensive program building leadership, collaboration and entrepreneurial capability, with targeted support to uplift grant success, HDR supervision including a diversity and inclusion focus, and engagement with industry and community. Since 2023, we have grown our HDR cohort (+27%) through stronger foundations including fee-offset and project-based scholarships, and a new Graduate Certificate pathway embedded in First Nations ways of being, knowing and doing. Our partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council delivers a Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Theory and Practice, with student projects to be shaped into research proposals.

The next phase is to grow domestic HDR enrolments and completions by harnessing industry and community partnerships, contributing to national HDR policy, instituting completive stipends, and expanding our outreach to at-risk HDR candidates.

We consider increasing HDR enrolment and retention is best achieved through, and we will advocate for, stronger partner and industry links, more attractive career outcomes, and competitive PhD stipends. We support more industry-embedded HDR fellowships via tax incentives, scholarship extensions that enable industry placements of 6 months during candidature, practical support for HDR candidates raising children (such as childcare rebates and flexible transition from full time to part time as required) and broader outreach and mentoring programs beyond the supervisor relationship.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
HDR domestic completions	HESC – Verified 2024	53	56	60 by 2031
HDR domestic retention	CSU supplied HESC – Verified 2024	87.20%	All HDR students monitored within early intervention retention program	90.00% by 2031
HDR domestic enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	464	457	470 by 2031

Section 3: Course and campus changes

Course closures

Before closing any undergraduate or postgraduate course of study in which Commonwealth supported students have been enrolled for more than two years without its immediate replacement by a course of study that leads to the same occupation or provides a similar specialised skill (including any suspension of intake of students for more than one consecutive academic year), the provider must notify the ATEC of its plans in writing.

Notification of actual or potential closures must occur as soon as reasonably possible before final decisions to close courses are made, or before any information on the potential course closure is made public (whichever comes first). Notification must occur via email to studentprofiles@atec.gov.au as information on proposed course closures becomes available.

Providers must provide a list of all courses proposed for closure and a short justification (e.g. low student demand).

Where a proposed course closure falls within one or more of the areas of Commonwealth concern, providers must identify the relevant courses and provide additional information. Areas of Commonwealth concern include whether the course:

- prepares students for an occupation experiencing a skills shortage
- is in a field where closure may create a skills shortage, including where the provider is the sole or dominant national provider
- is a specialised course linked to a regional economy
- is in a field identified as an ATEC priority in the interim SSP:
  - health, aged care and disability support
  - education, including early childhood education and care
  - sovereign capability and food security, including advanced manufacturing and critical minerals
  - digital and technology
  - housing and construction
  - climate change and Net Zero transformation
- is funded under a specific Commonwealth initiative such as Nuclear-Powered Submarine places.

Where a closure relates to one or more Commonwealth concerns as listed above, the provider must provide information on:

- the expected high-level impacts on staff and students arising from the closures, including numbers of students and staff affected, and how these impacts are being mitigated including alternative options available for students
- the consultation undertaken with staff, students, community and other stakeholders
- how the provider is meeting relevant requirements under the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, including the proposed teach out provisions to ensure existing students can complete their chosen course of study
- potential options to retain the course, including through cooperation with another provider or the movement of Commonwealth supported places to another provider (where applicable).

If the ATEC has any concerns about the potential course closure based on the information provided, the provider must engage with any discussions that the ATEC may seek to have, to reach a mutually agreeable arrangement with the provider regarding the course closure.

Where a provider determines that a closure does not relate to any identified Commonwealth concerns, they are only required to notify ATEC of the name of the course being closed via email to studentprofiles@atec.gov.au and classify it as a routine/low concern closure.

Campus changes

Providers must notify the ATEC if the provider proposes to enrol Commonwealth supported students in a course of study at a new campus or educational facility, or if the provider proposes to close a campus where Commonwealth supported students are enrolled.