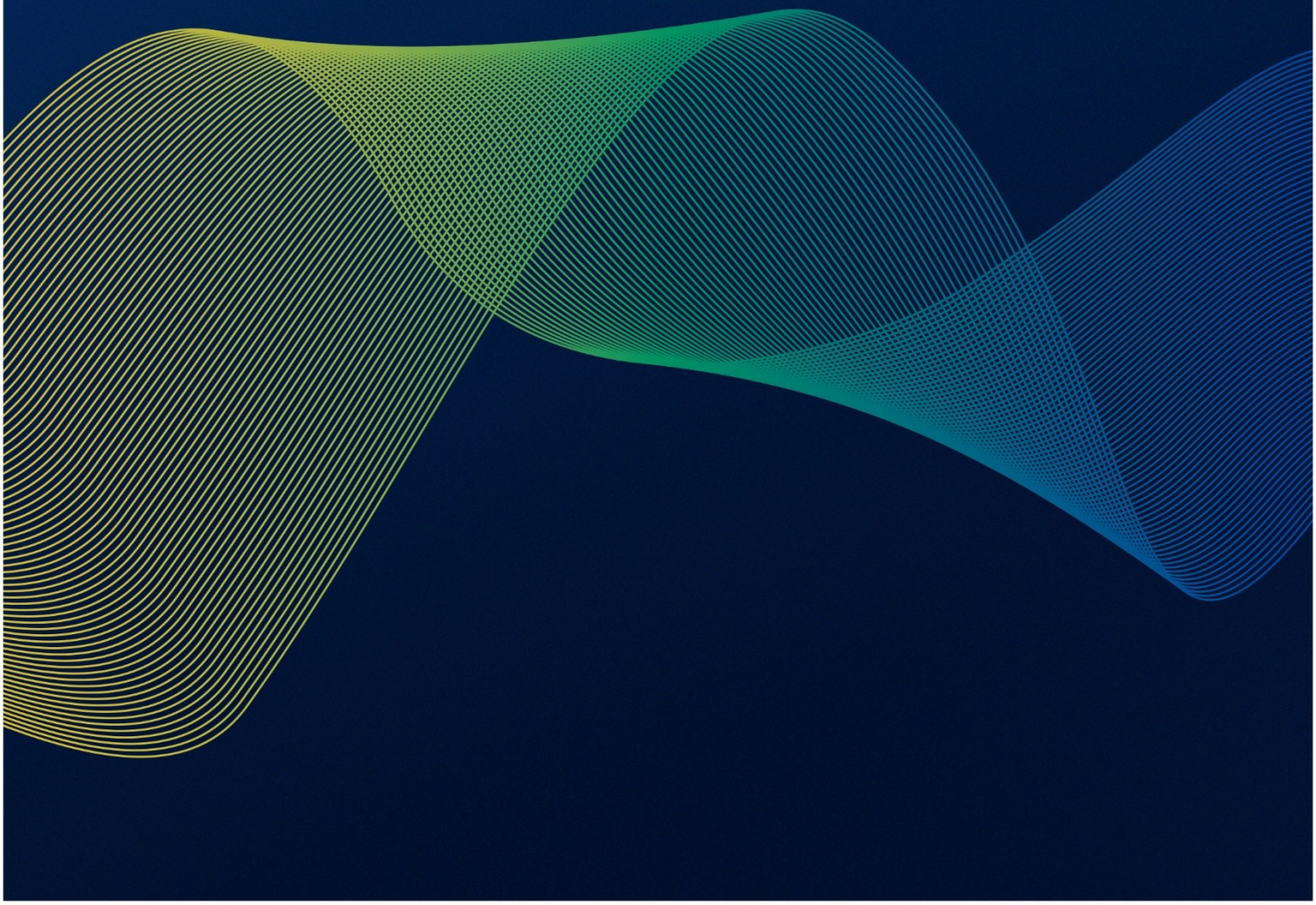
Australian Government

ATEC
Australian Tertiary
Education Commission

ECU
EDITH COWAN
UNIVERSITY

# 2027 mission based compact between the ATEC and Edith Cowan University



# Preface

This mission based compact is established between the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and Edith Cowan University in accordance with the *Universities Accord (Australian Tertiary Education Commission) Act 2026* (ATEC Act). This mission based compact highlights the significant contributions Edith Cowan 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 Edith Cowan 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 Edith Cowan 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 Edith Cowan University's academic freedom.

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

The ATEC must assess Edith Cowan 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 Edith Cowan 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 Edith Cowan 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 Edith Cowan 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 Edith Cowan University to provide relevant information consistent with subsection 30(2) of the ATEC Act.

The ATEC may conduct annual check-in meetings with Edith Cowan University as needed, to discuss Edith Cowan University's progress towards meeting the terms of this compact. If Edith Cowan University has any concerns about their ability to meet the agreed terms of this compact, including as a result of matters reasonably outside Edith Cowan University's control, Edith Cowan 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.

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# Section 1: Context

## Mission statement

Edith Cowan University (ECU) is a comprehensive public university with its main campus at Joondalup in Perth's northern suburbs, a landmark new campus in Perth CBD, and a South West campus in Bunbury – WA's largest regional campus. ECU also has a campus in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

ECU's purpose is to transform lives and enrich society. We are a university of connection, purpose, and high impact and our strategy aligns to the State Government's priorities for a more joined-up higher education sector, which includes strengthening inclusion, driving collaborative research with impact, skills development and tertiary harmonisation and a commitment to partnering with industry and government.

ECU equips students with the skills to lead in the disciplines driving national and State workforce agendas in education, health, aged care, advanced manufacturing, creative industries, digital and technology, defence, clean energy and the space industry.

ECU is focused on the future of the higher education sector and will deliver on the ambitions of the Accord. We ensure talent, not circumstance, determines opportunity, helping students realise their potential. The benefits extend beyond individual success, boosting productivity and enhancing social wellbeing.

WA has Australia's fastest growing population, with Perth leading all capital cities in growth. The State Government's economic and regional development strategy is to invest in vital regional centres. Accordingly, ECU is supporting the growth of Perth's northern corridor, strengthening the South West and regional communities and revitalising the Perth CBD.

Our strategic goals: ECU Strategic Plan 2026-2031 *Connecting to make a difference* ensure we will:

- be a sector leader in education, known for the outstanding capabilities of our students
- solve critical world problems through collaborative research, innovation and engagement
- drive change as a partner of choice for industry, government and community
- strengthen inclusion, elevate Aboriginal leadership and achieve excellence through equity
- deliver on our shared goals by investing in our people, delivering opportunities for them to thrive
- deliver outstanding experiences in all our places and spaces
- secure our future through sustainable growth and capacity to invest in our strategic priorities.

The commitments in this compact enliven ECU's goals through:

- contribution to **national and state priorities** in health and education, where ECU already has significant programs, and in digital and technology, particularly to support WA's defence and clean energy industries, including in regional WA
- expansion of our significant **VET pathways** to higher education, particularly for equity students, shaping an integrated tertiary system centred on upskilling, reskilling and advanced training
- ambitions to ensure that **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** voices are central to our decisions and strategic priorities, with success rates equal to all ECU students
- increased participation for **equity students**, including from regional WA communities, reflected in our leadership, inclusive environment, and high-quality academic support services to improve success, retention, and graduate employment outcomes
- longstanding excellence in the **quality of teaching**, our continued commitment to curriculum innovation and to maintain our position as a leading Australian university for student experience
- intent to grow **Higher Degree by Research** cohort through industry-aligned programs, strategic partnerships, and enhanced candidate experiences.

## Enrolment strategy and priorities

ECU embraces the challenge set by the Accord to upskill the Australian population. While WA is the fastest growing State, it has the lowest ATAR participation rate in the nation. Our response needs to be innovative, creative and inclusive. ECU has a long, successful record of widening participation in higher education and delivering strong graduate outcomes through excellent teaching and a central focus on student wellbeing. ECU will expand pathways for participation aligned to state and national priorities, including more seamless pathways for those with a Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification including for students of mature age, regional and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

ECU will align to national and state skills needs in information technology (IT), engineering, education, health and aged care to achieve sustainable growth in the disciplines that meet these workforce priorities.

The following factors support the achievement of our enrolment strategy:

**ECU's course profile advances national and State workforce priorities**

- To assist growth of WA's defence and clean energy industries aligned to priorities, ECU will grow course offerings and enrolments in IT and engineering at City Campus and the South West.
- Through its leading teacher education and nursing programs ECU will support national and State priority workforce needs.

**ECU's strategy is to stimulate domestic demand**

- Despite its population growth WA has weaker tertiary education participation. ECU will stimulate participation and contribute to the Accord's goals. ECU can meet this measured growth.
- ECU is experiencing strong domestic demand for courses at City Campus and will expand course offerings.
- ECU will innovate in widening access to tertiary education – school leaver, first nation, equity or maturer age and for Veterans.

**ECU will increase access and participation through enabling programs and VET pathways**

- ECU meets the needs of the working population, with 81% of domestic undergraduate commencers entering through non-ATAR pathways and 41% being of mature age. As a dual sector university ECU will extend its existing and significant VET pathways through proactive, significant and enduring collaborations with VET partners.
- ECU's highly regarded, and over-subscribed Enabling program (UniPrep) is one of Australia's largest, with over 1,500 enrolments, supported by 700 FFUR places. We will grow this pipeline with additional places.

**ECU provides accessible and transformative tertiary education to regional communities**

- ECU South West encompasses WA's largest regional campus in Bunbury. We will expand our network of co-located learning precincts and hubs, enhancing access and completions with equivalent multi-modal learning experiences.
- Bunbury is central to the State Government's Seven Cities vision, which commits to growing quality education and training to meet the region's critical workforce needs.

**ECU's International Education approach aligns with Government priorities**

- ECU will further diversify its source markets, particularly for our City Campus, allied with an additional 2000 beds in purpose-built student accommodation in the campus environs.
- We expect the proportion of international onshore students to remain at recent levels.
- ECU's Colombo campus in Sri Lanka will provide growth in overall international student numbers, and we intend to grow offshore student load to 10% of total load in 2027.

# 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

ECU is strongly aligned with State and Federal Governments' priorities for a more joined-up higher education sector.

ECU will expand VET pathways, connecting vocational and higher education, industry engagement and lifelong learning coherently, to support Australia's economic and sovereign capability. This includes increasing capacity in prioritised disciplines including digital, technology, defence and clean energy.

ECU will continue to lead in teacher education, including early childhood, nursing and midwifery, growing enrolments in programs and specialisations (subject to quota settings) and in key allied health disciplines through new courses that address emerging workforce, community and skills needs, including aged care and disability support.

### Action

**ECU will strengthen:**

- VET articulation arrangements and pathways into ECU's bachelor courses from the increasing pool of IT VET course completions.
- ECU's strong presence in technology, nursing and other health disciplines and consistent domestic student growth over the previous five years.
- The pathway established in 2026 for Registered Nurses based in the regions to study paramedicine.
- Greater access to nursing programs for VET pathway applicants by adjusting internal processes for applications and offers so that those graduating later from VET courses are not disadvantaged.

**Commence:**

- A new one-year Master of Cyber Security (Professional) from 2027, for cybersecurity professionals wishing to upskill.
- A redesigned Data Science major for the Bachelor of Computer Science from 2027.
- Exploring new pathways for TAFE graduates in environmental health, to address acute shortages in trained officers.
- Growing new course offerings in allied health disciplines.
- Building on the established VET pathway into ECU's Bachelor of Nursing, for those with a VET Diploma in Nursing, establishing a career pathway from Enrolled Nurse to Registered Nurse.

Further opportunities for increased articulation in Engineering and Education disciplines, are included under the Performance Domain: Joined-up tertiary system.

**Actions to be undertaken in 2027 will contribute to:**

- enrolment growth in IT disciplines of 114 headcount (80 EFTSL).
- enrolment growth in health disciplines of 196 headcount (121 EFTSL).

## Measure

| Indicator | Data source | Provider baseline | Milestone for 2027 | Expected outcome and timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **06 Health** | | | | |
| Total student enrolments | HESC – Verified 2025 | 4,695 | 4,800 | To increase at a rate higher than the overall ECU domestic undergraduate growth rate annually |
| Success rate | HESC – Verified 2024 | 93.48% | 94% | To maintain annually |
| Retention rate | HESC – Verified 2024 | 83.19% | 83% | To maintain annually |
| **02 Information Technology** | | | | |
| Total student enrolments | HESC – Verified 2025 | 1,002 | 1,116 | To increase at a rate higher than the overall ECU domestic undergraduate growth rate each year |
| Success rate | HESC – Verified 2024 | 81.91% | 82% | To maintain annually |
| Retention rate | HESC – Verified 2024 | 75.56% | 78% | To increase to ECU average by 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

ECU will strengthen its sector leadership in First Nations education, research, student experience and impact by centring First Nations voices in decision-making, learning and teaching, research, student experience and community engagement.

ECU is dedicated to improving access, participation, retention and success outcomes for First Nations students and strengthening Indigenous-led research and community partnerships that contribute to improved Indigenous health, wellbeing and community-driven impact.

Aligned missions in tertiary harmonisation - where this can strengthen equitable access and support transitions into priority industries – will create clearer pathways for First Nations students into higher education and employment.

## Action

**ECU will strengthen:**

- First Nations access and participation through outreach, enabling and pathway initiatives, utilising funding from the Commonwealth's Outreach program, Needs-based Funding and Indigenous Student Success Program. Activities will include community sessions on campus and online, experiences and tours, events such as the Deadly Sista Girlz Expo, WA high school visits facilitated by ECU's Kurongkurl Katitjin's Engagement Team and First Nations Future Student Engagement Coordinator.
- Engagement with First Nations workers in pathways to university study through an industry showcase with key partner industries.
- Onboarding processes through early intervention, mentoring and proactive, culturally responsive academic support to improve First Nations student success, retention and completion. ECU's Kurongkurl Katitjin Student Success Team identifies and supports students at academic risk with tailored success plans, and students considering leaving study, through options for study breaks, reduced study load and financial assistance.
- Indigenous-led research capability and community partnerships, with a focus on Indigenous impact.

**Commence:**

- Invest in First Nations participation in WA, offering a guaranteed Commonwealth-supported Place that follows the student across in any of ECU's postgraduate coursework courses.
- A new Kurongkurl Katitjin postgraduate student success officer.
- A new Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) to drive Indigenous leadership across ECU through strengthened First Nations leadership structures, governance, voice and decision-making across education, research, student experience and community engagement.
- A new governance mechanism that centres Aboriginal authority, self-determination and educational sovereignty, will oversee key policies, strategic planning, curriculum Indigenisation, cultural competency, student success and community partnerships, and guide ECU to deliver on commitments to First Nations staff, students and communities.
- An anti-racism toolkit, improving cultural safety, reducing barriers to participation and strengthening accountability for First Nations student and staff experiences.

**ECU seeks in 2027 to:**

- Increase First Nations undergraduate enrolments by 5%.
- Increase non-demand driven course enrolments (postgraduate coursework) by 8%.
- Achieve incremental uplift of approximately 1 percentage point per year toward parity in student success outcomes by 2031.

## Measure

| Indicator | Data source | Provider baseline | Milestone for 2027 | Expected outcome and timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| First Nations total enrolments | HESC – Verified 2025 | 256 | 270 | To increase at a rate higher than the overall ECU domestic undergraduate growth rate annually |
| First Nations success rate | HESC – Verified 2024 | 87.02% | 88.0% | To achieve parity with all ECU students by 2031<br>(ECU Strategic Plan KPI) |
| First Nations retention rate | HESC – Verified 2024 | 69.41% | 71.0% | To achieve parity with all ECU students by 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

Since its establishment, ECU has been a leader in expanding higher education access and attainment. It has delivered significant opportunities for thousands of talented students who might otherwise have been excluded from higher education and has contributed directly to workforce participation.

Continued investment in ECU's sector-leading, equity-first approach will continue to stimulate enrolment growth and course completions, further enabled by our inclusive environment, high quality academic teaching and supportive centralised services.

Through its ECU South West Bunbury Campus, ECU will continue to play a critical role in developing regional talent and supporting the sustainability of regional communities and economies in WA.

## Action

ECU will continue to strengthen equity access, participation, retention, student success and completion through targeted pathway programs, inclusive learning environments and evidence-informed student support initiatives.

**ECU will focus on:**

- A more joined up tertiary education model to provide more learning options and a smoother transition for equity students into ECU courses.
- Enhanced targeted academic success, wellbeing, financial support and early intervention initiatives for students identified as at risk of disengagement or attrition, guided by the Student Retention Action Plan. For example, ECU provides a Study Boost Bursary for low SES students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, characterised by identifying early those likely to benefit from financial support and monitoring outcomes.
- Expanded defence force veteran transition pathways into university. ECU is committed to being part of the solution in WA to the challenge of growing the workforce for the needs of the defence industry, offering flexible study options, institutional peer support and a network of support and links to defence-aligned industry employment.
- Implementation of Universal Design for Learning principles across curriculum, learning environments and teaching practices to improve accessibility and participation.
- Accessibility and flexibility across online and on-campus learning environments to better support students with disability, mature-age learners and students balancing work or caring responsibilities.
- Partnerships with schools, TAFEs and community organisations in regional Western Australia to support students to achieve their aspirations for higher education.

**Commence:**

- Expanded non-ATAR pathway options and enabling programs, including UniPrep and VET articulation pathways, to support participation from low SES, regional, remote and other underrepresented cohorts.
- Institution-wide initiatives that identify and address progression bottlenecks and support a frictionless student experience that leads to increased student retention and completion outcomes.
- Externally benchmarking the ECU Access and Inclusion Index to strengthen accountability and continuous improvement in equity and inclusion outcomes.
- Leverage ECU's South West Bunbury Campus and regional partnerships to improve participation and educational attainment outcomes for regional and remote communities.

**ECU seeks to:**

- Increase enrolments of students from equity groups at rates greater than the overall domestic undergraduate cohort.
- Improve retention and success rates to achieve parity with the overall domestic undergraduate cohort by 2031.

## Measure

| Indicator | Cohort | Data source | Provider baseline | Milestone for 2027 | Expected outcome and timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total enrolments | Students with disability | HESC – Verified 2025 | 1,756 | 1,900 | To increase at a rate greater than the overall domestic undergraduate growth rate annually |
| Total enrolments | Students from low SES backgrounds | HESC – Verified 2025 | 3,130 | 3,198 | To increase at a rate greater than the overall domestic undergraduate growth rate annually |
| Total enrolments | Regional | HESC – Verified 2025 | 1,786 | 1,823 | To increase at a rate greater than the overall domestic undergraduate growth rate annually |
| Total enrolments | Remote | HESC – Verified 2025 | 234 | 243 | To increase at a rate greater than the overall domestic undergraduate growth rate annually |
| Success | Students with disability | HESC – Verified 2024 | 88.32% | 88% | At or above the overall ECU domestic undergraduate success rate by 2031 |
| Success | Students from low SES backgrounds | HESC – Verified 2024 | 89.00% | 89% | At or above the overall ECU domestic undergraduate success rate by 2031 |
| Success | Regional | HESC – Verified 2024 | 90.94% | 91% | At or above the overall ECU domestic undergraduate success rate by 2031 |
| Success | Remote | HESC – Verified 2024 | 88.55% | 89% | At or above the overall ECU domestic undergraduate success rate by 2031 |
| Retention | Students with disability | HESC – Verified 2024 | 74.42% | 76% | At or above the overall ECU domestic undergraduate retention rate by 2031 |
| Retention | Students from low SES backgrounds | HESC – Verified 2024 | 74.73% | 76% | At or above the overall ECU domestic undergraduate retention rate by 2031 |
| Retention | Regional | HESC – Verified 2024 | 74.29% | 76% | At or above the overall ECU domestic undergraduate retention rate by 2031 |
| Retention | Remote | HESC – Verified 2024 | 67.61% | 70% | At or above the overall ECU domestic undergraduate retention rate by 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

ECU is recognised for its longstanding excellence in the quality of its teaching. We are dedicated to maintaining our position as a leading Australian university for students' learning experiences. Our commitment to curriculum innovation in the classroom, aligned with our focus on student wellbeing and support, ensures quality teaching is embedded in all our plans.

Through sustained investment in teaching capability and recognition, we will ensure our learning environments are inclusive, engaging, and respect the needs of diverse learners. Curriculum and assessment will be renewed, with a focus on universal design, and work-integrated learning expanded to prepare graduates for future workforce needs.

## Action

ECU has a long history in professional development in teaching for all staff, which it is extending through its academic framework. We are also investing significantly in the education experience for students. Both are intrinsically connected. We will continue to strengthen teaching quality, student engagement and learning outcomes through innovative, student-centred and evidence-informed approaches to learning and teaching.

In taking this forward, we are making a significant commitment to enhancing our well recognised excellence in student experience with a focus on face-to-face teaching.

**ECU will strengthen:**

- Mandated role-based professional development courses, augmented by expanded professional learning opportunities for academic staff in teaching practice, digital pedagogy, assessment design, student engagement strategies, and inclusive teaching practice.
- Implementation of ECU's Curriculum Transformation Program to strengthen comprehensive programmatic learning, authentic assessment, feedback practices and graduate capability development. This sector-leading initiative in curriculum design will shift the emphasis towards deeper learning. It is aligned with emerging sector thinking, including TEQSA's emphasis on assuring learning across the whole degree program rather than relying solely on assessment at the level of individual units.
- High-quality online learning experiences through improved digital pedagogy, accessible learning design and flexible delivery approaches, to address declining teaching quality sentiments of online learners.
- Assurance of learning and curriculum quality processes to support consistent, high-quality learning experiences across all delivery modes.

**Commence:**

- Launch ECU's Academic Careers Framework in 2027. The Framework places stronger emphasis on educational quality, teaching leadership and curriculum innovation and includes a set of teaching quality standards aligned with ATEC's proposed national guides for evidence of teaching quality and professional practice.
- A Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice and a structured program of professional development and support in subjects including: Inclusive design and teaching practice; Open Door Teaching; Peer Review of Teaching; Scholarship of Learning and Teaching Community of Practice; learning and teaching awards support; Indigenising the Curriculum; and relevant curriculum and teaching practice professional development.

**ECU seeks to:**

- Improve teaching quality and student engagement outcomes.
- Achieve a ranking in the top three of public universities on the Teaching Quality and Engagement scale from the Student Experience Survey (SES) by 2028.

## Measure

| Indicator | Data source | Provider baseline | Milestone for 2027 | Expected outcome and timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teaching quality and engagement | QILT SES – Verified 2025 | 81.1% | 82.0% | To be ranked in the top 3 of public universities for teaching quality results by 2028<br>(ECU Strategic Plan KPI) |

## Joined-up tertiary system

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

### Vision

ECU is strongly aligned to ATEC's vision for a more connected and coherent tertiary system. ECU exemplifies tertiary harmonisation in action, creating flexible pathways that puts learners first. VET students transitioning to ECU bachelor programs, receive on average 90% of the maximum credit value, saving almost a year of study. This fast-tracks workforce participation in areas of demand and supports opportunities for lifelong learning.

ECU will continue to work collaboratively with VET partners to provide seamless student pathways to higher education and propel a genuinely connected tertiary system that drives innovation, skills development and economic growth for WA.

### Action

**ECU will strengthen:**

- Existing VET articulation pathways with transparent advanced standing arrangements, including regionally for better articulation through credit for recognition of prior learning. ECU will continue to drive average volume of 0.9 EFTSL, and improve where possible, for its VET pathways into bachelor courses.
- Growth of VET pathways in engineering and education through:
    - Targeted promotion of articulation from VET Diploma and VET Advanced Diploma completions in engineering courses into ECU's bachelor-level engineering and engineering technology courses.
    - Developing flexible delivery models for engineering laboratory activities that better accommodate FIFO workers and align with their work patterns.
    - Growing the pathways for Certificate IV in School Based Education Support and VET Diploma completers into the ECU Bachelor of Education courses.

**Commence*:***

- A WA leading and nationally significant regional tertiary education model, founded in collaboration, not competition, with TAFE. ECU aims to leverage the complementary strengths of TAFEs, particularly regionally, through shared use of facilities, collaborative program development, joint offerings, and coordinated marketing and community engagement activities.
- The regional tertiary harmonisation model, in collaboration with local industry, to promote articulation in both directions between VET and higher education, in support of lifelong learning, and ensuring that both sectors contribute to State and national skills priority areas of: health, aged care and disability support; education, including early childhood education and care; food security, advanced manufacturing and critical minerals; digital and technology; and renewables.
- Further collaborations with State Government to address the skills needs of Western Australia and its priorities. We will undertake detailed analysis of opportunities in this space, such as our existing connections to North Metro TAFE and South Regional TAFE and potential for broader regional partnerships and co-location.

Further opportunities for increased articulation in Health and IT disciplines, are included under the Performance Domain: National, State/territory and regional priorities.

ECU's Strategic Plan includes a commitment to increase the proportion of award course student load from those entering through a VET pathway to 25% by 2028. ECU also is committed to growing the cumulative credit provided to those entering bachelor courses with VET qualifications.

## Measure

| Indicator | Data source | Provider baseline | Milestone for 2027 | Expected outcome and timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total credit provided to commencing domestic bachelor students admitted on any basis, where VET studies or qualifications provide credit | ECU supplied – based on HESC Preliminary 2025 | 410 EFTSL | 537 EFTSL | To increase to 600 EFTSL by 2031 |
| Proportion of domestic undergraduate students admitted on a detailed basis for admission of VET | ECU supplied – based on HESC Preliminary 2025 and SMS detailed basis for admission | 18% | 22% | To increase the proportion of award course student load from those entering through a VET pathway to 25% by 2028<br>(ECU Strategic Plan KPI) |

# Research

*Sustaining national capability and supporting innovation through research and research training*

## Vision

ECU will strengthen its contribution to State and national research priorities through high-quality, impactful research and a sustainable, well-supported research training system. We will grow and diversify our domestic Higher Degree by Research (HDR) cohort through industry-aligned programs that respond to real-world problems, strategic partnerships, and an enhanced experience that supports success, wellbeing, and excellence. ECU's research vision aligns with ATEC's priorities to build postgraduate research capacity and support innovation, with a strategic focus on collaborative, impact-driven research that supports national sovereign research capability required to meet future challenges. ECU will enliven its strong international partnerships with world-class organisations to support innovation for larger impact.

## Action

ECU will focus on targeted, practical actions in 2027 to strengthen research training quality, scale and impact. We recognise some current challenges to promoting HDR participation particularly from an equity perspective and we will positively engage in opportunities and policy discussion towards addressing these, particularly in the advancement of part-time participation and funding models.

**ECU will strengthen:**

*Scholarships and funding sustainability*

- Rebalance internal scholarship investment toward strategic research areas in health, defence, energy transition and technology and grow fruitful partnership opportunities.
- Increase co-funded HDR scholarships with industry, government and international partners to reduce reliance on ECU-funded stipends.

*Partnership-based research training models*

- Embed and scale industry-engaged and joint PhD models to enhance employability, research translation and external engagement.
- Expand joint and cotutelle PhD programs to support international collaboration and broaden enrolment pipelines.

**Candidate experience, progression and outcomes**

- Improve milestone management, progression support and early intervention for at-risk candidates.
- Expand industry engagement opportunities within HDR programs to drive employability and impact.
- Improve overall HDR lifecycle design, shifting from compliance to a development-focused model.

**Commence:**

*HDR enrolment growth and diversification*

- Implement a co-ordinated HDR growth approach aligned to ECU's HDR Development Plan, focusing on priority disciplines and partnership-led opportunities.
- Expand domestic HDR participation through targeted recruitment and improved pathways from Honours and Masters by Research courses.
- Align growth with workforce and research priorities, including for regional and First Nations participation and in areas of national and WA significance.

*Investment in our own people through building supervisory capacity and capability*

- Strengthen HDR leadership and supervisor development, including targeted support for early and mid-career researchers.
- Improve workload allocation models to ensure sustainable supervision capacity as enrolments grow.

These actions will support measurable improvement in HDR enrolments, completions, and research outcomes, and position ECU's research training system for sustainable growth. ECU's Strategic Plan includes a commitment to increase HDR enrolments as a proportion of total enrolments to 3.5% by 2031.

## Measure

| Indicator | Data source | Provider baseline | Milestone for 2027 | Expected outcome and timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HDR domestic enrolments | HESC – Verified 2025 | 546 | 556 | To increase HDR enrolments as a proportion of total enrolments to 3.5% by 2031<br>(ECU Strategic Plan KPI) |

# 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.