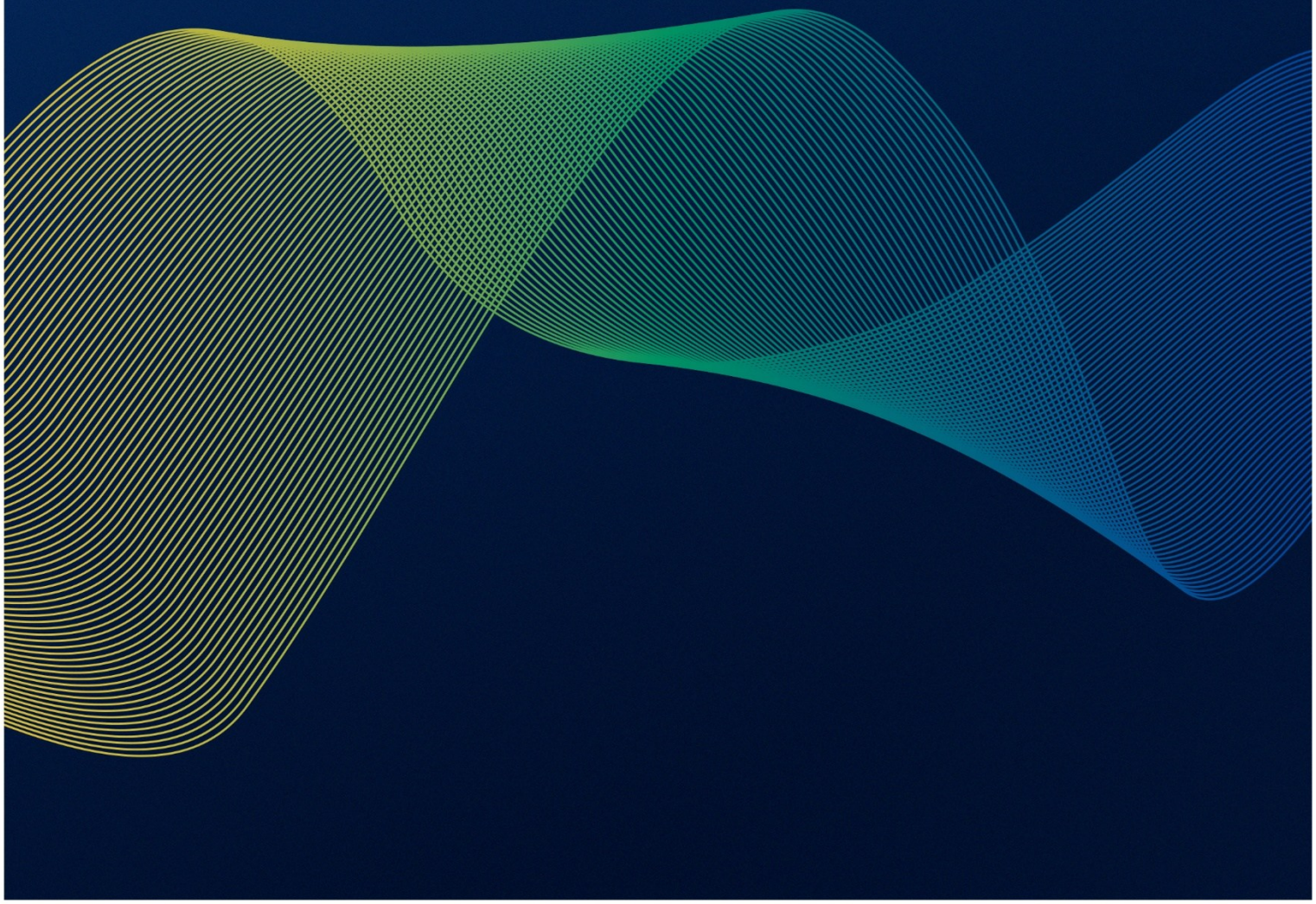
Australian Government

ATEC
Australian Tertiary Education Commission

Flinders University

2027 mission based compact between the ATEC and Flinders University



Preface

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

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

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

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

Flinders University's mission in this compact is to deliver **Impact with Purpose** for South Australia, the nation and our regions by advancing the life-changing power of education, research and partnerships. Guided by the University's Strategic Plan Agenda 2035, we are committed to **changing lives and changing the world** by being a university that is outward facing, community connected and a responsive university, equipped to address the opportunities and challenges of our time.

We will put **Students First** by expanding access, participation and success for learners from all backgrounds, with particular focus on equity cohorts, First Nations students, regional and remote communities, and those historically under-represented in higher education. We will provide flexible, high-quality learning, strong student support and clear pathways that enable more people to enter, succeed in and benefit from tertiary education.

We will be the **University for Industry and Enterprise** by aligning education, skills and research with areas of national, state and regional priority, including healthcare, education, defence, advanced manufacturing, digital capability, construction and the transition to a net zero economy. Through deep partnerships with employers, government, schools, TAFE and communities, we will co-design courses, pathways and innovation that build workforce capability, productivity and social mobility.

We will deliver **Research that Matters** by focusing on problems of real consequence and translating knowledge into practical solutions that improve lives, strengthen communities and support sovereign capability. Our research and research training will be collaborative, place-based where needed, globally connected and directed to public value.

Across all of this work, Flinders University will act with accountability, inclusion and ambition. We will build on our distinctive strengths in access and equity, our strong presence in South Australia and the Northern Territory, and our commitment to partnership with First Nations peoples and local communities. Through this compact, Flinders commits to making measurable progress towards a more joined-up, high-performing and equitable tertiary system, contributing to the national goal of broader participation, stronger skills pipelines and better outcomes for students, employers and society.

Our ambition

Flinders University's ambition is to increase to 25,000 Equivalent Full-time Student Load (EFTSL) within 5 years by:

- Meeting workforce demands in fields such as healthcare (with initiatives like the Flinders' HealthCARE Centre), supporting the nuclear powered submarine (NPS) program, and expanding key professions including teaching, early childhood education, social work, technology, and construction.
- Fulfilling its founding mission to challenge the status quo and open doors that others might have closed by providing accessible, high-quality education to equity students.
- Enhancing support for regional, rural, and remote communities.
- Increasing research impact by raising annual quantum of HERDC income from $130 million to $200 million.

Enrolment strategy and priorities

Significant investment, as approved in the HECG Equity Plans (2024 and 2025), has already been made to advance Flinders University's growth objectives. Key initiatives include the development of Flinders City Campus and Flinders Online, both of which focus strongly on equity groups. Furthermore, the Australian Government's $150 million contribution, matched by the University, has supported the establishment of the Flinders HealthCARE Centre, reflecting a shared commitment to producing an additional 1,300 healthcare workers annually. In 2024, the Government also allocated 330 additional Nuclear-Powered Submarine (NPS) places to enhance defence strategy support.

These measures, combined with the South Australian context, have led to significant growth rates for commencing students in recent years (12.8% domestic and 22% international in 2025; 24.15% domestic and 18.58% international in 2026). While Flinders demonstrates a strong growth trajectory and ambitious plans for further growth, several factors need to be considered in facilitating these objectives.

Flinders University operated at just under 95% of its Maximum Basic Grant Amount (MBGA) in 2024, resulting in zero indexation for 2026, but we experienced robust growth in 2025 taking us very close to full MBGA utilisation. Based on our growth performance and emerging demand indicators, Flinders was granted a 16% glidepath for 2026. Since then, the University has experienced further strong growth, resulting in ATEC increasing the glidepath to 19% in June 2026. Actual commencing domestic load growth in 2026 was 24.15%. A substantial portion of these students (15.2% of commencing students) will receive marginal funding in 2026.

Despite receiving a substantial percentage glidepath, Flinders' absolute commencing allocation remains mid-tier within the sector, notwithstanding the institution is mid-sized and has proven capacity for growth.

Flinders continues to experience strong demand and so the planned growth target for 2027 is 14,271 Commonwealth EFTSL, an increase of 2,449* from the 2025 forward estimate or 1,082 from the estimated 2026 load (13,189). This growth comprises several components including:

- Additional student recruitment for the Flinders HealthCARE Centre in 2027, supporting the commitment of graduating 1,300 additional healthcare professionals annually.
- NPS Commonwealth supported places (CSPs), reaching full capacity in 2027 with 100 new commencing students joining continuing students.
- Increase to Fee-Free Uni Ready (FFUR) students undertaking enabling programs to provide a pathway into higher education.

**This does not include First Nations or medical places growth.*

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

Flinders University will meet national, state and regional priorities through a targeted growth strategy that aligns student load, course delivery and partnership activity with the ATEC interim Statement of Strategic Priorities and South Australia's economic and social needs. Guided by Agenda 2035, our load planning and mission based compact priorities, we will align education, skills and partnership with current and emerging workforce needs in healthcare, education, defence, digital and technology, advanced manufacturing, housing and construction, and climate and the transition to net zero. We will do this through high-quality, flexible and industry-connected education that strengthens South Australia, the Northern Territory, and supports national capability and changes lives for the better.

Action

Flinders HealthCARE Centre

The Australian Government and Flinders University are jointly investing in the $300 million Flinders HealthCARE Centre, which will produce an additional 1,300 healthcare graduates annually to address workforce shortages in South Australia (SA). This requires sustained growth in student enrolments. The first stage of growth was achieved through commencements in 2025-2026, but a further increase of 465 extra EFTSL is required in 2027.

Note: domestic healthcare growth (including social work) was 14.9% in 2026.

Nuclear Powered Submarine program

To support AUKUS, Flinders received 330 CSPs in defence-related education and advanced manufacturing, which have been oversubscribed since they were awarded in 2024. Flinders has introduced Australia's only undergraduate nuclear engineering program and partnered with industry leaders to develop degree apprenticeships (mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering, cyber security, gazetted by SA Skills Commission), which have been highly successful. To scale this work up, barriers such as industry fringe benefit tax (FBT) need to be addressed. Flinders is also collaborating with the SA Government's Technical Colleges to create vocational pathways, significantly advancing the defence agenda. This work aligns with the South Australian Defence Industry Workforce and Skills Action Plan (2025).

Note: domestic Engineering and IT growth in 2026 was 17.7%.

Education

Flinders focuses on employment-based pathways for Initial Teacher Education, particularly in early childhood, supported by the State Government (South Australian Public Education Workforce Strategy; South Australia's Early Childhood Workforce Strategy). This includes an apprenticeship for Early Childhood Education in rural and regional areas which is in the process of being submitted to the Skills Commission, a Teaching Studies pathway for Indigenous school officers, and an employment-based pathway with Lutheran Education SA, NT & WA.

Note: domestic Education growth was 27.2% in 2026.

Housing and construction

Supporting South Australia's Construction Workforce Plan (2026), new programs include civil engineering degree apprenticeships (gazetted 2026), urban and regional planning with an apprenticeship option in development, a project management apprenticeship in progress, and construction management launching in 2027.

In line with the SA Government's Net Zero Strategy and Climate Ready Initiative, Flinders offers degrees in environmental science, environmental engineering, renewable energy, and geospatial information systems as well as net zero business topics. Additionally, business, IT and law provide the foundation for these priorities, with a focus on AI, business analytics and digital technology. Flinders is also leading the nation in Industry PhDs, further contributing to national and state priorities.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
01 Natural and Physical Sciences				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	1,502	1,685	Steady growth to 1,850 in 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	89.00%	90.00%	92.00%
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	77.71%	80.00%	82.00%
02 Information Technology				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	504	630	Strong growth to 800 in 2031
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	82.28%	85.00%	88.00%
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	74.37%	76.50%	80.00%
03 Engineering and Related Technologies				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	857	1,055	Strong growth to 1,300 in 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	88.73%	90.00%	92.00%
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	82.98%	84.00%	85.00%
04 Architecture and Building				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	16	122	New steady growth 200 in 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	Data not available	Meet or exceed university average	Meet or exceed university average
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	Data not available	Meet or exceed university average	Meet or exceed university average
05 Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	59	Maintain	Maintain
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	91.78%	Maintain	Maintain
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	86.96%	Maintain	Maintain
06 Health				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	4,127	5,155	Significant growth reaching additional 1,300 commencers (plus continuing) by 2029 (FHC)
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	90.79%	Maintain	Maintain
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	76.88%	80.00%	82.00%

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
07 Education				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	1,285	1,537	Strong growth to 1,750 in 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	90.63%	Maintain	Maintain
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	75.36%	80.00%	82.00%
08 Management and Commerce				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	760	1,045	Steady growth to 1,200 in 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	84.48%	85.00%	88.00%
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	70.89%	75.00%	80.00%
09 Society and Culture				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	2,990	3,485	Steady growth to 3,650 in 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	85.33%	87.50%	90.00%
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	72.69%	75.00%	80.00%

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

Flinders University recognises the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and enacts self-determination as the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to define and pursue their own priorities, aspirations and pathways. At Flinders, this moves beyond consultation and advise, to First Nations leadership, authority and decision making, Self-determination is embedded through First Nations led research, teaching, student success, community engagement, governance and institutional transformation.

The Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan, grounded in Decision-Making, Truth-Telling, Voice, Historical Rights and Interests, and Sovereignty, is complemented by the Indigenous Workforce Strategy, Indigenous Student Success Targets and Indigenous Research Strategy. Together, these frameworks provide a foundation for sustained First Nations leadership and accountability across the University with progress measured through clear commitments and outcomes.

First Nations-led governance structures, including the Tarrkarri-ana and Elders Committees, provide mechanisms for First Nations leadership and decision-making alongside representation across broader university governance groups. First Nations people are involved from the outset in setting priorities, shaping policy and determining actions.

Action

Flinders supports First Nations students across the full student lifecycle through the Indigenous Student Success Program, led by the Office of Indigenous Strategy and Engagement, and Yungkurrinthi Student Engagement. The University's Indigenous Student Success Target (ISST) participation target for all First Nations students is 2.4% by the end of 2028 with an internal stretch target of 2.7%. Current participation is at 2.1% in SA and 10.4% in the NT, representing 2.3% overall.

A $1.165 million **HECG Equity Plan** supported growth through scholarships, a Progress and Retention Support Officer, STEM skills adviser, NT outreach and pathway support, and student success grants.

Flinders University will advance First Nations student success through the University's Reconciliation Action Plan guided by First Nations leadership and governance. This includes:

Attraction and commencing students: Yungkurrinthi Outreach and Pathways, Indigenous Foundations Studies and the Indigenous Admissions Scheme provide school engagement and flexible, culturally informed pathways into higher education across SA and NT, alongside dedicated scholarships.

Participation, connection and belonging: Country centred design principles, Elders on campus and staff capability initiatives strengthen culturally safe, anti-racist and responsive learning environments, while embedding First Nations knowledges and perspectives.

Retention, success and completion: Yungkurrinthi Student Engagement provides early intervention, case management and targeted support, complemented by Deadly Study Skills, the Yungkurrinthi Tutorial Program, counselling, advocacy, scholarships and regional supports. Visibility and tailored support through better identification of First Nations students in recruitment and student systems, enabling timely communication, advice and wraparound support.

Graduate outcomes: Internships, career development and employment pathways through Flinders Careers and CareerHub support students to transition into meaningful careers.

Flinders' **Northern Territory presence** gives practical effect to its First Nations and regional priorities through place-based health and education delivery across Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and other remote community settings, this includes the NT Medical Program which provides a nationally significant pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and clinical placements that support culturally responsive workforce pipelines for First Nation communities.

Through these actions, Flinders will pursue measurable progress and ensure First Nations student success is treated as a whole-of-university leadership priority.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
First Nations total enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	293	356	Steady growth by 50 EFTSL per year
First Nations success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	75.33%	80.00%	Meet or exceed university average
First Nations retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	72.92%	75.00%	Meet or exceed university average

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

Building on our enduring commitment to social inclusion and supported by HECG Equity Plan investment, Flinders is advancing equity through an inclusive, student-focused, and evidence-based approach. This includes major initiatives such as Flinders City Campus, Flinders Online, equity scholarships, and enabling programs. The University is focussed on improving access, participation, success and attainment for under-represented groups and priority cohorts, including students with disabilities, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those from regional, rural, and remote communities.

Flinders will expand flexible and supported pathways into higher education enabling programs, alternative admissions, VET articulation, and online pathways while strengthening visible, timely, and learning-linked support, flexibility and opportunities students need to participate, succeed, and graduate.

Action

Flinders performs strongly against national equity measures, with 22.2-23% of its domestic undergraduate cohort coming from low SES backgrounds (compared with the national average of 17%). Flinders has demonstrated a consistent upward trend in low SES participation in recent years, supported by its outer metropolitan campuses, targeted support including entry pathways, financial equity scholarships and the key initiatives outlined below:

Flinders City Campus established with HECG Equity Plan investment to serve students from the northern, eastern, and western regions of Adelaide. Flinders City Campus offers more than 100 courses and helps create accessible pathways for learners who may not otherwise participate in tertiary education. Flinders has made substantial investments in this strategic project, with $14 million allocated to as part of the 2024 and 2025 HECG equity plans. The 2025 investment supported the provision of clinical teaching spaces, a second computer laboratory suited to cyber security training, and additional general teaching areas to accommodate increasing demand.

The domestic cohort at City Campus now comprises of 48% equity students (including First Nations students, students with disability, low SES students, regional, rural and remote students, and first in family students), with nearly 30% originating from northern Adelaide suburbs, an area with some of the lowest participation rates in higher education in the country.

Flinders Online launched in 2025 with HECG Equity Plan investment. Flinders Online provides high-quality, accessible programs designed to expand participation for students who require flexible modes of study. The University has invested more than $4 million in technology, learner and content design, and student support. HECG Equity Plan funding has supported the initiative. Already, the new platform already has over 1,500 enrolled students, with strong representation supporting equity and social mobility: 72% female, 67% aged over 30 years, 69% first in family, and 25% from regional, rural, and remote areas.

FFUR: Flinders has experienced significant growth in enabling courses with enrolments substantially exceeding its allocated 261 FFUR. In 2025 there were 739 enrolments (369.5 EFTSL), and in 2026 there have been 973 enrolments (473 EFTSL), a 23.4% increase year-on-year. These courses form an important mechanism for expanding access for students who may not enter higher education through conventional pathways.

Regional, rural, and remote communities: Flinders maintains strong engagement with regional, rural and remote communities, through multiple teaching locations and collaboration with Regional University Centres. This work complements the University's broader place-based approach and commitment to ensuring that geography is not a barrier to participation or success in higher education.

Additionally, Flinders is enhancing early engagement and intervention during key transition stages. These measures are designed to ensure that equity support is visible, timely, and connected to learning, enabling students to remain engaged and complete their studies.

Measure

Indicator	Cohort	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Total enrolments	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2025	1,359	1,615	Steady growth to 1,800 in 2030
Total enrolments	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2025	3,085	3,655	Strong growth to 4,500 in 2030
Total enrolments	Regional	HESC – Verified 2025	2,282	2,699	Strong growth to 3,000 in 2030
Total enrolments	Remote	HESC – Verified 2025	260	307	Steady growth to 400 in 2030
Success	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	84.08%	86.00%	Meet or exceed university average
Success	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	85.19%	86.00%	Meet or exceed university average
Success	Regional	HESC – Verified 2024	88.63%	Meet or exceed university average	Meet or exceed university average
Success	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	89.03%	Meet or exceed university average	Meet or exceed university average
Retention	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	73.99%	75.00%	Meet or exceed university average
Retention	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	74.15%	75.00%	Meet or exceed university average
Retention	Regional	HESC –Verified 2024	75.88%	Meet or exceed university average	Meet or exceed university average
Retention	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	81.44%	Meet or exceed university average	Meet or exceed university average

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

Flinders University's vision for quality teaching is to deliver a student-first learning experience that is inclusive, engaging and evidence-informed, so that every student can succeed. Our approach is to treat quality teaching as a core institutional capability, not a metric to be managed. We will foster our culture to ensure high quality teaching is valued, supported and continuously improved across the University. Our commitment is to inclusive, digitally enabled and culturally responsive teaching that improves student engagement, success, retention and belonging across all modes and cohorts. By investing in our educators, using evidence to improve practice, and aligning teaching innovation with student outcomes, Flinders will ensure that quality teaching is sustained, recognised and continuously improved.

Action

Flinders University performs strongly in teaching quality. The 2024 student experience survey data (ComparEd) show Flinders above the national average in all categories and, predominantly in the top quartile for public universities: overall experience (78.7% v 76.6% ranked 10th); skill development (83.3% v 81.1% ranked 4th); teaching practices (82.4% v 80.5% ranked 7th); peer interactions (64.8% v 59.5% ranked 11th); resources (85.7% v 83.3% ranked 12th) and support 75.4% v 71.2% ranked 7th). Preliminary 2025 data indicate that this strong performance is continuing.

This performance is underpinned by a comprehensive, evidence-informed approach to teaching quality that extends well beyond QILT student experience metrics. It brings together external recognition of teaching excellence, professional accreditation, peer learning, academic development, learning design support, peer review of teaching and targeted capability-building. This teaching quality was demonstrated in 2025, when we received four Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) citations. Our growing culture of professional teaching practice is also reflected in 97 Advance HE Fellows, comprising 3 Associate Fellows, 48 Fellows, 43 Senior Fellows and 2 Principal Fellows. This capability base is being further strengthened with 94 Advance HE applications in 2026.

Professional learning and peer communities provide further foundations for quality teaching. Our Learning Design Community of Practice has 147 members, while mandatory University Teaching Enhancement for probationary academics, was completed by 56 staff in 2025. In addition, the Flinders Learning and Teaching Academy delivered 7 professional learning events during the year to 271 attendees, across academic staff and professional staff, in addition e-learning workshops have trained 120 academics in contemporary learning technologies so far in 2026.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate that Flinders treats teaching quality as a sustained institutional capability, embedded in staff development, curriculum design, digital learning practice, peer communities and external benchmarking, rather than as a set of student satisfaction indicators alone.

Flinders University will continue to deliver quality of teaching through a coordinated whole-of-institution approach that connects curriculum, assessment, student support and educator capability. We will continue to strengthen learning design and teaching practice through Learning and Teaching Innovation, including academic development, learning design support, university teaching enhancement at Flinders, and recognition of teaching excellence.

We will also continue to invest in student-centred support services and digital learning tools, including embedded workshops, learning support, AI-enabled study support, and flexible online resources. This will ensure that face-to-face, online and regional students can access high-quality teaching and support in ways that suit their mode of study and individual needs.

Through these actions, Flinders will pursue measurable improvement in teaching quality, student experience, success, retention and graduate outcomes, while building an increasingly stronger culture of evidence-based, inclusive and continuously improving teaching practice across the University.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Overall educational experience	QILT SES – Verified 2025	78.7%	Top quartile of universities	Top quartile of universities
Skills development	QILT SES – Verified 2025	84.0%	Top quartile of universities	Top quartile of universities
Teaching quality and engagement	QILT SES – Verified 2025	83.3%	Top quartile of universities	Top quartile of universities
Student support and services	QILT SES – Verified 2025	76.8%	Top quartile of universities	Top quartile of universities

Joined-up tertiary system

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

Vision

Flinders University has an important role in SA's tertiary education system and as a key partner with technical colleges, schools, TAFE SA and other VET providers. Our vision for a joined-up tertiary system is to create clearer, more trusted and more flexible pathways between VET and higher education, enabling students to move smoothly between qualifications and succeed in the mode of study that best meets their goals.

We will work with TAFE and other partners to design pathways that are transparent, high quality and responsive to workforce and learner needs, with improved credit recognition, stronger student support and more coherent course structures. In doing so, Flinders will contribute to a tertiary system that is more connected, accessible and efficient for students, employers and communities.

Action

Flinders will contribute to a more coherent tertiary system in South Australia, one that widens participation, supports lifelong learning and enables learners to move more effectively between vocational and higher education. We will strengthen the connections by improving the design, operation and student experience of pathways between the two sectors. Our focus will be on clearer articulation, more consistent credit arrangements, and course structures that make progression more transparent for students and easier to administer. Flinders will also continue to pursue integrated tertiary opportunities in priority areas where pathways can expand participation and address workforce demand and so doing providing clear value for student and industry.

TAFE pathways: Flinders currently partners with TAFE SA to offer 28 articulation arrangements across priority discipline areas alongside a further 21 dual offers with guaranteed entry admission pathways for Certificate IV+ graduates. In 2025 these arrangements resulted in 520 enrolments to the university. The Flinders Foundation Study Program is also offered through TAFE campuses to provide an alternative pathway to university. In 2025 89 students enrolled in these programs with a 76% pass rate.

Dual awards: Flinders partners with TAFE SA to offer a range of dual award programs with a particular focus on creative arts. To date in 2026 these programs have attracted over 1,000 applicants resulting in 257 offers, representing, a slight increase from 2025. A recent review identified opportunities to re-design these courses to lift the student experience and improve retention and success. Work to uplift existing programs and explore opportunities for new disciplines will continue in 2027 with a view to launching new offerings in 2028.

Technical colleges: South Australia introduced technical colleges to provide students in Years 10-12 with an alternative education model that combines a non-traditional model that embeds industry experience with vocational education. Flinders University has partnered with all 5 technical colleges, allowing students to undertake foundation study programs that support dual enrolment in Year 12 and university study and provide a scaffolded fast-track into future careers. With all 5 colleges officially opened in 2026, already 98 students are already undertaking Flinders Foundation Studies Programs in Advanced Manufacturing, Early Childhood and Health & Social Impact.

School pathway programs: Flinders works with schools to co-designs pathway programs (Flinders Aligned) that recognise SACE completion through a combination of Stage 2 subjects and Vocational Education (VET) as a strong preparation for university study. Students may also incorporate university level study through the Flinders Extension Studies Program supporting ATAR attainment as well as credit for relevant degree programs. Complementary access pathways include an Assessment Centre, UniTest, a School Recommendation program, Uni Equity Scheme, and activating Identities and Futures Pathway, providing additional routes into higher education for students.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Average amount of credit provided to domestic bachelor students admitted on the basis of VET	Internal student administration system	8 topics (first year equivalent)	8 topics (first year equivalent)	8 topics (first year equivalent)
Domestic students admitted to a bachelor course on the basis of VET	2025 commencing headcount	327	500	Stronger growth to 650 in 2030
Attrition rate of domestic bachelor students admitted on the basis of VET	2024 commencing attrition (internal student administration system)	27%	25%	Reduce to 20% by 2030
Success rate of domestic bachelor students admitted on the basis of VET	2025 commencing success rate (internal student administration system)	84%	86%	Meet university average

Research

Sustaining national capability and supporting innovation through research and research training

Vision

Innovation-led research, focused on areas of strength, generating knowledge, and delivering solutions, is a value embedded in Flinders' research and research training. By pushing the boundaries of creativity, discovery, and invention, Flinders advances knowledge for the benefit of society. Through bold, collaborative research that crosses disciplinary boundaries, we tackle complex and wicked problems and pioneer new frontiers.

By partnering with industry, government, and community, creates new opportunities for researchers and Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students to apply their skills and experience to real world challenges. We will strengthen research based training that builds capability, provides professional experience and opens pathways into diverse careers, while translating research into practical solutions that deliver social, economic and environmental benefit.

Action

Flinders University will build and support research for impact by establishing a shared, practical understanding of research impact across the institution, underpinned by a framework that tracks inputs, activities and outcomes. This will make the real-world difference of Flinders' research clearer to communities, partners and decision-makers, and better position our research to inform policy, practice and investment. Flinders will continue to align areas of impact with institutional capability, funding opportunities and infrastructure, focusing research and research training efforts where they can make the greatest contribution to society, the economy and the environment. Our 4 focused areas of impact are Health and Wellbeing; Sustainability; Society and Culture; and Defence and Productivity addressing national and South Australian and Northern Territory priorities.

To build critical mass in these priority areas, Flinders University will prioritise the recruitment of talented researchers and HDR students in these areas of priority. We will deliver a whole-of-career research training approach, equipping researchers at every stage with the skills, confidence and support needed to undertake high-quality, impactful research. To strengthen the HDR pipeline, we will design strategies to attract diverse national and international cohorts, refine support from recruitment through to completion, and build partnerships with key regions and organisations aligned to our areas of impact. In recognising that the average age for a PhD student is 34, a major focus will be on creating flexible, scaffolded pathways, that cater to industry professionals seeking to return to HDR studies. By creating opportunities for this important, but underrepresented cohort of HDR students, Flinders will leverage their professional experience, accelerate their development as future research leaders, and deepen our links to industry, to deliver 'Research That Matters'.

As a 'University for Industry and Enterprise', Flinders will continue to focus its engagement efforts on identifying new research partnerships that deliver the greatest value, deepening engagement with current partners, and building long-term collaborations with industry, government and community that generate shared social, economic and environmental impact. Flinders is currently leading the nation in the number of National Industry PhD Programs being awarded. Our global position will be strengthened by developing strategic international alliances that secure major collaborative research funding, expand joint HDR and education programs, and create opportunities for student and staff mobility.

Central to this agenda, and consistent with the University's Indigenous Research Strategy, Flinders will embed best practice in First Nations-led research – supporting research led by First Nations researchers and shaped by the priorities and benefits defined by First Nations communities themselves.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
HDR domestic enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	853	871	Increased domestic commencing enrolment in 2027(in the context of a national 8% decline from 2018-24)
HDR domestic completions	HESC – Verified 2024	130	110	Stable domestic completion in 2027 due to a reduced commencing load during the COVID pandemic
Community engaged and consulted to guide research focus	Flinders Wicked Problems report	15,000 Australians consulted in 2026	Another 15,000 Australians consulted	Populational Survey Completed in 2027; Research and research priorities at Flinders focused on community needs
At least 1 new ARC Centre of Excellence and 1 new NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence fully commissioned	Institutional agreements with ARC and NHMRC, and other partner institutions	N/A	2 new Centres fully commissioned and operational	Increased capacity building in two focussed areas of impact and excellence

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.