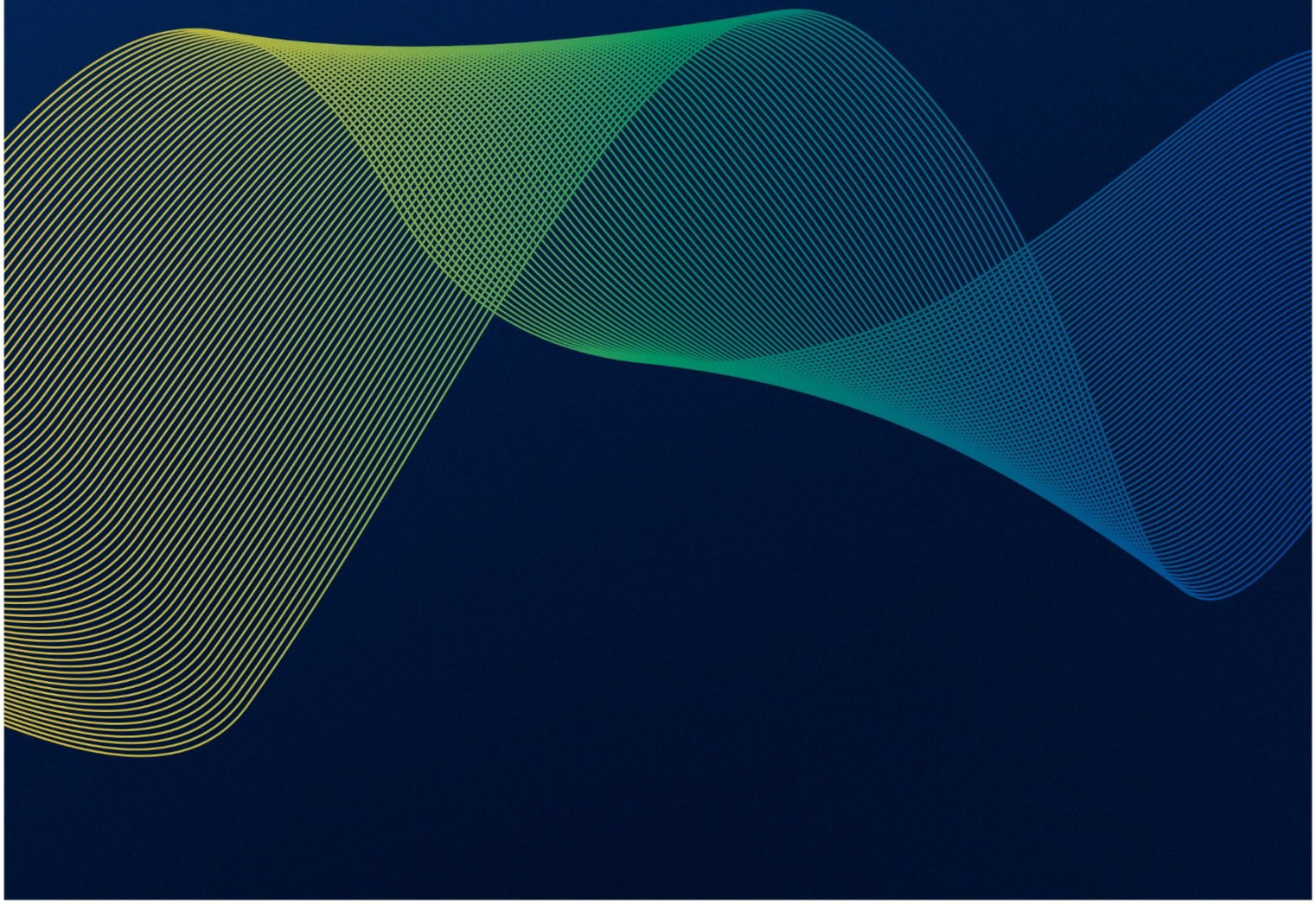
Australian Government

ATEC
Australian Tertiary Education Commission

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA

2027 mission based compact between the ATEC and James Cook University



Preface

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

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

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

The ATEC may conduct annual check-in meetings with James Cook University as needed, to discuss James Cook University's progress towards meeting the terms of this compact. If James Cook University has any concerns about their ability to meet the agreed terms of this compact, including as a result of matters reasonably outside James Cook University's control, James Cook 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 **6**

National, State/territory and regional priorities 6

First Nations 8

Equity 10

Quality teaching 12

Joined-up tertiary system 14

Research 16

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

Section 1: Context

Mission statement

Our purpose

Creating a brighter future for life in the Tropics and beyond, through education and research that makes a difference locally, and globally.

An international University as reflected in our people, our places, and our research, James Cook University (JCU) takes pride in being recognised as a leading tertiary institution. The University consistently delivers outstanding student outcomes with high employability for our graduates.

We are the quintessential regional university deeply woven into the intellectual, economic and social fabric of the diverse communities we serve and set amid irreplaceable ecosystems and cultures in northern Queensland. We provide practical and experiential research-rich learning environments for our students, fostering their confidence, professional expertise and intellectual curiosity.

JCU ascribes great importance to experiential learning that includes experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting in familiar and unfamiliar settings (real and simulated). We strive to base our partnerships with local experts and consultative groups on reciprocity, and focus on our purpose of serving our regional, rural, and remote communities. Our students are strongly connected to a sense of place, understanding their responsibilities to the region we serve. JCU graduates make a tangible difference to Northern Australia that can't be replicated from elsewhere in Australia.

JCU's commitment to raising the educational attainment rates in northern Queensland, and our commitment to regional development, is embedded in our enrolment strategy, our course delivery, our student success activities and our place-based, challenge-led, research directions. Our students, like our staff, are resourceful and talented, and with the right opportunities in place, they achieve their educational goals, sharing the benefits with their families and our communities.

We have consistently argued that a Regional Learning System approach is required in northern Queensland to raise educational attainment levels across lifetime learning trajectories, with schools, TAFE, Study Hubs and JCU working collaboratively to establish transparent and accountable progress in the North. In this compact we signal our values and partnership aspirations to develop the frameworks that are needed to move this approach forward. We also set out how a Regional Learner Record – as key data infrastructure based on the Unique Student Identifier (USI) will enable personalised learning trajectories in northern Queensland.

Given our place, Indigenous Futures and self-determination must also be central to JCU's purpose. We must be fully committed to Indigenous-led and determined pathways to a strong economic and social future. JCU is a key part of ensuring northern Queensland and Northern Australia is culturally, socially and economically strong and that all people in the North can share in the benefits of a vibrant society.

The University is under increased financial pressure with the introduction of Managed Growth and Needs-based Funding. A key priority across 2027 and looking further forward is to work with Government on sustainable resourcing models that account for the genuine costs of regional delivery.

Enrolment strategy and priorities

JCU is committed to recognising and adding educational value for regional learners who frequently do not follow traditional linear educational paths. Expanding the pool of learners is central to our enrolment strategy and is our highest priority in the near term. In parallel, we are strongly focussed on raising attainment levels for all student cohorts.

We were successful in our application for Structural Adjustment Funding to support foundational work across 3 activities in 2027, with delivery-at-scale to follow.

Rather than asking learners to fit a standard university model, JCU will identify where each person is on their educational journey, recognise the knowledge, skills and credit they hold, and create personalised pathways to the right next step in study, support and attainment (both VET and higher education). This strengths-based model is built around lifetime learning trajectories and is enabled by more connected data and AI-driven personalised student experiences. The systemic approach includes:

The Regional Learner Record (RLR)

This USI-linked data architecture supports a single learner identity, integrated learner record, dashboards, privacy and ethics controls, and reporting capability. A RLR can be made for individual learners, whether current students, past students who have not completed, or those who have never previously enrolled at tertiary-level. The RLR enables regional coordination with TAFE/VET, and lower cost-to-serve, while addressing current fragmentation across systems, data and service delivery.

For current students, the RLR will draw from JCU's student systems to enable hyper-personalised advanced AI data analytics and dashboards to drive timely, individualised support; strategies that build learner capabilities to manage learning and personal challenges; and efficient monitoring, managing of progress data, outcomes and impact of support strategies. Hyper-personalised functionality includes:

- academic advising – track and guide students through levels, majors and awards
- learning analytics – monitor engagement, trigger interventions, support assessment
- academic and Pastoral connections – identifies and connects students as needed
- feedback – supports real time student input.

Recognising attainment pathway – a strengths-based approach

This activity develops the capability to properly accredit existing knowledge through capturing it (via the RLR), rapidly measuring it against Learning Outcomes of JCU's course architecture and AQF awards 1-10, and then finding the next educational step, whether an exit qualification at TAFE or University, or personalised pathway to reengage at the next highest level.

The activity builds shared capability with TAFE, creates new entry and exit points, faster credit recognition, enables subjects to be stacked at different award levels and different disciplines, and delivers stronger attainment pathways across tertiary education.

Learning Integrated Work Model (LIWM)

JCU is developing a LIWM with Indigenous Rangers as an initial proof for taking university to learners who cannot or do not want to leave work, community or Country. The program works through AI to assess existing competencies and identify development pathways for Bachelor-level qualifications. A pilot commencing in 2027 includes key features of:

- personalised learning plans, adapting to work environment needs using workplace challenges
- progress tracked through competency and mastery rather than mandatory attendance
- professional mentoring and peer support delivered digitally to any location in real time
- degree-level qualifications awarded based on demonstrated capabilities.

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

JCU will help meet Queensland's and Australia's future workforce, productivity and sovereign capability needs by expanding educational attainment and delivering graduates in disciplines critical to regional and national prosperity. Through strong pathways, industry partnerships and place-based education, JCU will strengthen workforce supply in health, education, engineering, construction, digital capability and human services across Northern Australia. As Northern Australia's only provider of Veterinary Science, JCU plays a critical role in supporting agricultural industries, food security and biosecurity, strengthening Australia's resilience to emerging threats. By 2030, JCU will increase participation, support regional development and deliver skilled graduates to the communities that need them most.

Action

JCU will focus growth, participation and student success initiatives on Fields of Education that address sustained workforce demand across Northern Australia. Priority areas include health, education, engineering, rehabilitation therapies, social work and veterinary science, where increased graduate supply can make a direct contribution to regional workforce capacity and national skills priorities.

JCU's place-based model strengthens the impact of this investment. Graduates who study in northern Queensland are significantly more likely to remain and work in outer regional and remote communities. For example, 86% of JCU education graduates, 82% of engineering graduates and 79% of nursing graduates work in outer regional and remote Queensland. Increasing participation and completion in these disciplines therefore provides a direct pathway to strengthening workforce supply in the communities experiencing the greatest need.

JCU will also continue to strengthen nationally significant capabilities, particularly Veterinary Science. As Northern Australia's only provider of Veterinary Science, JCU contributes to the veterinary workforce required to support agricultural productivity, food security and Australia's biosecurity resilience.

JCU will pursue these priorities through targeted actions to improve access, retention and equitable participation in priority disciplines.

Access

- Increase the number of students transitioning from JCU Prep (fee-free enabling) into professional degrees at JCU, through enhanced transition support, visibility of destination degrees and simplified enrolment pathways.

Retention

- Target scholarships to students from low SES backgrounds to support cost-of-living whilst on placement in Engineering, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Veterinary Science and Social Work to strengthen participation in critical workforce disciplines.

Equity

- Ensure all JCU students have access to Microsoft Co-Pilot AI and graduate with AI competencies relevant to their discipline, strengthening digital capability and supporting workforce readiness across regional Australia.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
03 Engineering and Related Technologies				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	448	392	Growth to 2030: 508
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	88.13%	≥ 90%	≥ 90% to 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	76.70%	≥ baseline	Increase to 2030: ≥ 85%
07 Education				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	862	919	Growth to 2030: 1,190
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	93.16%	≥ 90%	≥ 90% to 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	81.61%	≥ baseline	Increase to 2030: ≥ 85%
0611 Veterinary Science				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	379	428	Growth to 2030: 523
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	96.15%	≥ 90%	≥ 90% to 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	89.83%	≥ baseline	≥ baseline
0603 Nursing				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	1,352	1,408	Growth to 2030: 1,725
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	94.05%	≥ 90%	≥ 90% to 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	81.03%	≥ baseline	Increase to 2030: ≥ 85%
0617 Rehabilitation Therapies				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	628	671	Growth to 2030: 820
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	97.65%	≥ 90%	≥ 90% to 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	92.05%	≥ baseline	≥ baseline
0905 Human Welfare Studies and Services				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	248	228	Growth to 2030: 295
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	91.35%	≥ 90%	≥ 90% to 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	63.93%	≥ 68.7%	Increase to 2030: ≥ 85%

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

JCU will advance Indigenous Futures by making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success, leadership and self-determination central to its civic university mission in northern Queensland. Through Indigenous governance, the Indigenous Education Statement 2025-2030 and an evidence-based learner capability model, JCU will grow First Nations domestic undergraduate participation, sustain high success, improve retention and completion, and build the professional and leadership capabilities required by communities across Northern Australia. This will help build stronger communities, stronger workforces and stronger futures across Northern Australia.

Action

In 2027, JCU will deliver its Indigenous Education Statement 2025-2030 through institutional, not programmatic, mechanisms. Indigenous priorities will be authorised and reviewed through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Education and Strategy, the Indigenous Advisory Committee to the Vice-Chancellor and the Indigenous Management Team, and embedded in resource allocation, corporate performance measures, College and Directorate action plans, recruitment, promotion, recognition and policy systems.

JCU will strengthen recruitment, outreach, enabling and pathway activity across northern Queensland and adjoining communities, working with schools, TAFE, Study Hubs and community partners to increase the pool of prepared First Nations learners. This aligns First Nations access with JCU's broader Regional Learning System proposition: recover learner volume, recognise prior attainment, and build academic capacity in place.

JCU will scale its Indigenous-led learner capability model through the Indigenous Education and Research Centre and Colleges. This model builds the acquired capabilities students need to succeed in formal higher education environments, including academic confidence, help-seeking, organisation, persistence, self-regulation, subject engagement and self-efficacy. In 2027, JCU will strengthen structured engagement points, early identification of academic risk, tutor coordination, progress monitoring and individualised support planning to sustain success and lift retention.

JCU will also continue to advance Indigenous knowledges and curriculum, Indigenous research excellence, and Indigenous employment and leadership as core institutional commitments, reinforcing the student success measures in the Compact and the broader public value of JCU's Indigenous Futures agenda.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
First Nations total enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	542	600	Sustained growth in First Nations domestic undergraduate enrolments by 2030, contributing to JCU's Indigenous Education Statement ambition of 1,000 Indigenous student enrolments across the University and strengthening the regional learner pipeline for Indigenous communities in northern Queensland and Northern Australia.

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
First Nations success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	84.04%	87%	Sustained First Nations domestic undergraduate success at or above 87% through to 2030, supported by JCU's Indigenous-led learner capability model, structured academic support and early intervention and College partnership.
First Nations retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	66.15%	68.7%	Improved First Nations domestic undergraduate retention to at least 72% by 2030, supported by proactive engagement, progress monitoring, individualised support planning, strengthened student connection and the University's broader self-determination governance architecture.

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

JCU serves one of Australia's largest concentrations of regional, remote and low socioeconomic learners, making equity central to the University's mission and contribution to national attainment goals. Through place-based delivery, Regional University Study Hub and TAFE partnerships, personalised support and evidence-informed intervention, JCU will improve participation, retention, success and completion for under-represented students. JCU's approach focuses on supporting learners facing the greatest educational barriers while strengthening pathways into skilled employment and further study. By 2030, JCU will contribute to increased educational attainment, workforce participation and social mobility across Northern Australia.

Action

More than 87% of JCU's domestic students belong to one or more equity cohorts, making equity central to the University's mission and contribution to national attainment goals. Serving northern Queensland means supporting students from regional, remote, low socioeconomic and disability backgrounds, many of whom face significant barriers to higher education participation and success. Despite these challenges, JCU has very high participation among regional and remote students and achieves equity success and retention outcomes above the Table A provider average across key cohorts through personalised support, place-based delivery and a strong culture of student success. JCU's focus extends beyond access to ensuring students graduate with the skills required to contribute to their communities, regional economies and future workforce needs.

Strengthening regional access and pathways

JCU will expand opportunities for learners in underserved communities through its multi-campus model, partnerships with Regional University Study Hubs, TAFE Queensland, and targeted pathway programs. In 2027, JCU will further embed pathways activity within Regional University Study Hub locations across northern Queensland, bringing structured entry points to higher education closer to communities with historically lower participation rates. These activities support increased educational attainment and strengthen participation in tertiary education across the region.

Supporting student success and retention

JCU's strong equity outcomes are underpinned by personalised support, early intervention and a strong culture of student success. In 2027, the Regional Learner Record will enhance JCU's ability to identify students at risk earlier and provide more personalised support responses. This work will complement existing academic, pastoral and wellbeing supports that help students persist, succeed and complete their studies.

Improving inclusion and participation

JCU will continue implementing its Disability Action Plan 2026-2031, with a focus on embedding Universal Design for Learning principles and streamlining academic adjustment processes. These actions will strengthen inclusion, improve the student experience and support success for students with disability. Alongside broader equity initiatives, they will contribute to JCU's long-term ambition of increasing attainment, workforce participation and social mobility across Northern Australia.

Measure

Indicator	Cohort	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Total enrolments	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2025	831	870	Growth to 2030: 930
Total enrolments	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2025	2,566	2,650	Growth to 2030: 3,200
Total enrolments	Regional	HESC – Verified 2025	6,407	6,550	Growth to 2030: 6,910
Total enrolments	Remote	HESC – Verified 2025	353	375	Growth to 2030: 422
Success	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	88.12%	≥ 91-92%	≥ 91-92%
Success	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	89.82%	≥ 90%	≥ 90%
Success	Regional	HESC – Verified 2024	91.03%	≥ 91-92%	≥ 91-92%
Success	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	89.87%	≥ 90%	≥ 90%
Retention	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	77.96%	79%	Increase to 2030: ≥ 85%
Retention	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	75.38%	76%	Increase to 2030: ≥ 85%
Retention	Regional	HESC – Verified 2024	76.92%	77.5%	Increase to 2030: ≥ 85%
Retention	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	77.31%	78%	Increase to 2030: ≥ 85%

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

JCU will strengthen the quality and professional recognition of teaching by investing in the capability of its academic workforce. Through evidence-informed professional development, peer review of teaching, leadership in learning and teaching, and continuous improvement practices, JCU will support academic staff to deliver high-quality learning experiences across its multi-campus and multi-modal environment. Recognising the diverse needs of regional, remote and equity students, JCU will focus on building teaching capability that promotes student success, retention and attainment. By 2030, JCU will further embed a culture of teaching excellence, innovation and professional practice across the University.

Action

JCU's approach to quality teaching is founded on the principle that outstanding student outcomes are achieved through investment in the capability and professional practice of its academic workforce. Serving one of Australia's largest regional and equity student populations requires a sustained focus on developing teaching capability that supports student success, retention and educational attainment across diverse learner cohorts.

Professional practice and capability development

In 2027, JCU will strengthen the professional practice of teaching through structured academic development, peer review, leadership in learning and teaching, and evidence-informed continuous improvement. The University will support academic staff to enhance curriculum design, assessment practice, student engagement and feedback approaches, building capability across its multi-campus and multi-modal learning environment.

Teaching Impact Program and Peer Review of Teaching

JCU will utilise the Teaching Impact Program (TIP) and Peer Review of Teaching (PRoT) as its primary mechanisms for identifying effective teaching practice, supporting professional growth and improving consistency across teaching teams. These approaches will provide academic staff with structured opportunities for reflection, feedback and collaboration, while enabling Colleges to identify, share and scale successful teaching practices. Particular attention will be given to high-enrolment and first-year subjects where improvements can have the greatest impact on student success and retention.

Teaching leadership, supervision and recognition

JCU will strengthen pathways for teaching leadership and professional recognition by supporting academic staff to engage in professional learning, peer review and formal recognition of teaching practice. The University will continue to enhance supervisor development, promote teaching excellence and recognise staff contributions to student learning through institutional and sector-based recognition opportunities.

Learning analytics and continuous improvement

The Regional Learner Record will provide enhanced learning analytics and data insights that support evidence-informed teaching practice, enabling earlier identification of student needs and more targeted teaching interventions. These capabilities will strengthen JCU's approach to continuous improvement and support the delivery of high-quality learning experiences across all campuses and modes of study.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Skills development	QILT SES – Verified 2025	81.6%	83.6%	≥ 85%
Peer Review of Teaching	Internal records	To be established during 2026	80% of continuing and fixed-term staff with teaching responsibility engage annually	100% of continuing and fixed-term staff with teaching responsibility, and 60% of sessional teaching staff, engage annually by 2030
Teaching qualification or recognised equivalent	Internal records (as at August 2026)	32 staff hold a current Advance HE fellowship, at Associate Fellow, Fellow or Senior Fellow level. 67 formal education qualifications are recorded across JCU, spanning 9 award types from the Bachelor of Education through to the Doctor of Education.	Baseline published and professional learning pathway approved	90% of continuing and fixed-term staff with teaching responsibility hold a teaching qualification, a recognised fellowship, or demonstrated equivalent experience by 2030

Joined-up tertiary system

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

Vision

JCU is committed to building a connected tertiary education system across northern Queensland, recognising that increased educational attainment depends on strong collaboration between schools, TAFE, Study Hubs and universities. Through partnership with TAFE Queensland and other regional education providers, JCU will strengthen pathways, improve credit recognition and support learners to move seamlessly between vocational education, higher education and employment. By 2030, JCU will help create a more integrated Regional Learning System that expands participation, supports lifelong learning and enables more people across Northern Australia to attain tertiary qualifications and workforce-relevant skills.

Action

JCU's 2027 actions build on existing partnerships and pathway activity across northern Queensland to create a more connected tertiary education system. Through collaboration with TAFE Queensland, Regional University Study Hubs and regional partners, JCU is improving learner mobility, strengthening educational attainment and reducing barriers between vocational education and higher education.

JCU and TAFE Queensland have established a formal partnership to strengthen pathways between vocational education and higher education across North and Far North Queensland. The partnership includes 25 articulation and advanced standing arrangements and supports students progressing into disciplines including nursing, education, social work, business, information technology and law. Students entering through these pathways receive tailored transition support designed to strengthen participation, retention and success. JCU is also expanding collaboration with the Regional University Study Hubs network to better support regional and remote learners throughout their educational journey.

Regional Learner Record

As outlined under Enrolment Strategy, JCU will establish a USI linked data architecture that creates a single learner identity and integrated record for regional learners. For VET-admitted students, the Regional Learner Record will strengthen JCU's partnership with TAFE Queensland by enabling shared early-risk identification, coordinated student support, and improved data sharing to support successful transition into higher education.

Recognising attainment pathways

JCU will develop and pilot an improved Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) framework that assesses VET qualifications and work-based learning outcomes against Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) outcomes, identifies appropriate credit and entry points, and creates personalised pathways into bachelor study (or VET). The initial pilot will focus on re-engaging the approximately 13,000 regional learners in northern Queensland who commenced university study between 2016 and 2019 but withdrew without completing a qualification, many of whom hold partial VET or prior study credit. Building on JCU's established articulation and credit-transfer arrangements, this initiative will convert prior learning into a structured re-enrolment pathway and support clearer progression from TAFE into university study, or from university to TAFE.

Together, these activities will strengthen tertiary participation, expand pathways between vocational education and higher education, improve learner success and contribute to increased educational attainment across northern Queensland.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Domestic students admitted to a bachelor course on the basis of VET	JCU supplied	To be established in 2027	Baseline established via Regional Learner Record	Sustained growth in VET-admitted enrolments by 2030 as pathway infrastructure matures
Success rate of domestic bachelor students admitted on the basis of VET	JCU supplied	To be established in 2027	Baseline established; pilot cohort tracked	Improved success rate through Regional Learner Record support model by 2030

Research

Sustaining national capability and supporting innovation through research and research training

Vision

JCU will strengthen its role as Australia's university for the Tropics by delivering challenge-led, place-based and globally relevant research that addresses State and National priorities through northern Queensland and Northern Australia. JCU will further grow a regionally embedded research workforce building on its strengths in tropical health and healthcare, marine and environmental science, biosecurity, food security, critical minerals, sustainable economies, equitable societies and Indigenous Futures, and deepening partnerships with industry, government and communities. Research training and emerging researcher development will align with workforce skill demands and the priorities encapsulated in the Ambitious Australia report, and the revitalised ARC Program architecture and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) strategy.

Action

In 2027, JCU will sharpen its research agenda around challenge-led priorities where the University has distinctive capability and public value: tropical health and health care delivery, marine and environmental systems, biosecurity, food security, critical minerals, sustainable regional economies, equitable societies and Indigenous Futures. Research Institutes and Centres will continue to align activity to these priorities and strengthen the translation of research into measurable social, economic, cultural and environmental benefit for Northern Australia and the Indo-Pacific Tropics.

JCU will grow the total Higher Degree by Research (HDR) pipeline to support the research workforce in Northern Australia and neighbouring Tropical regions. In addition, JCU will seek to grow domestic HDR enrolments amidst sector-wide declining interest by domestic candidates and strong competition with high regional employment. In particular, JCU will expand our industry-integrated PhD program, termed PhD@Work, that targets advanced research skills aligned to national and regional industry demand. Further, to enhance the workforce readiness of our research training, JCU will increase the proportion of HDR students undertaking a Research Training Program-eligible industry internship.

These initiatives will be supported by a strengthened integrated research workforce development framework that builds capability across HDR students and early- and mid-career researchers and enhances supervision quality. Structured professional development and performance support of academic staff will promote research excellence, HDR candidate success, and timely completion outcomes, ensuring a sustainable and high-quality research and research training environment. JCU will position its research workforce development for improved performance in nationally competitive grants including the revitalised ARC Program, Medical Research Future Fund and NHMRC to build scale and impact in nationally significant priority programs.

JCU will also strengthen Indigenous research excellence and impact through Indigenous HDR pathways, early-career researcher development, Indigenous-led research networks, community-controlled research partnerships, Indigenous knowledge co-production, benefit-sharing and governance arrangements that ensure research delivers value for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
HDR domestic enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	437	Maintain or increase to 440	Maintain or grow domestic HDR enrolments to 2030, with growth increasingly aligned to JCU's challenge-led research priorities, Indigenous Futures, PhD@Work and regionally embedded research workforce development.
HDR completions with eligible internship	JCU completions; unverified TCSI data 2025	12	16	Increase number of HDR completions with eligible industry internships to facilitate clearer pathways into academic, industry, government and community research roles and reflect regional workforce needs.

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.