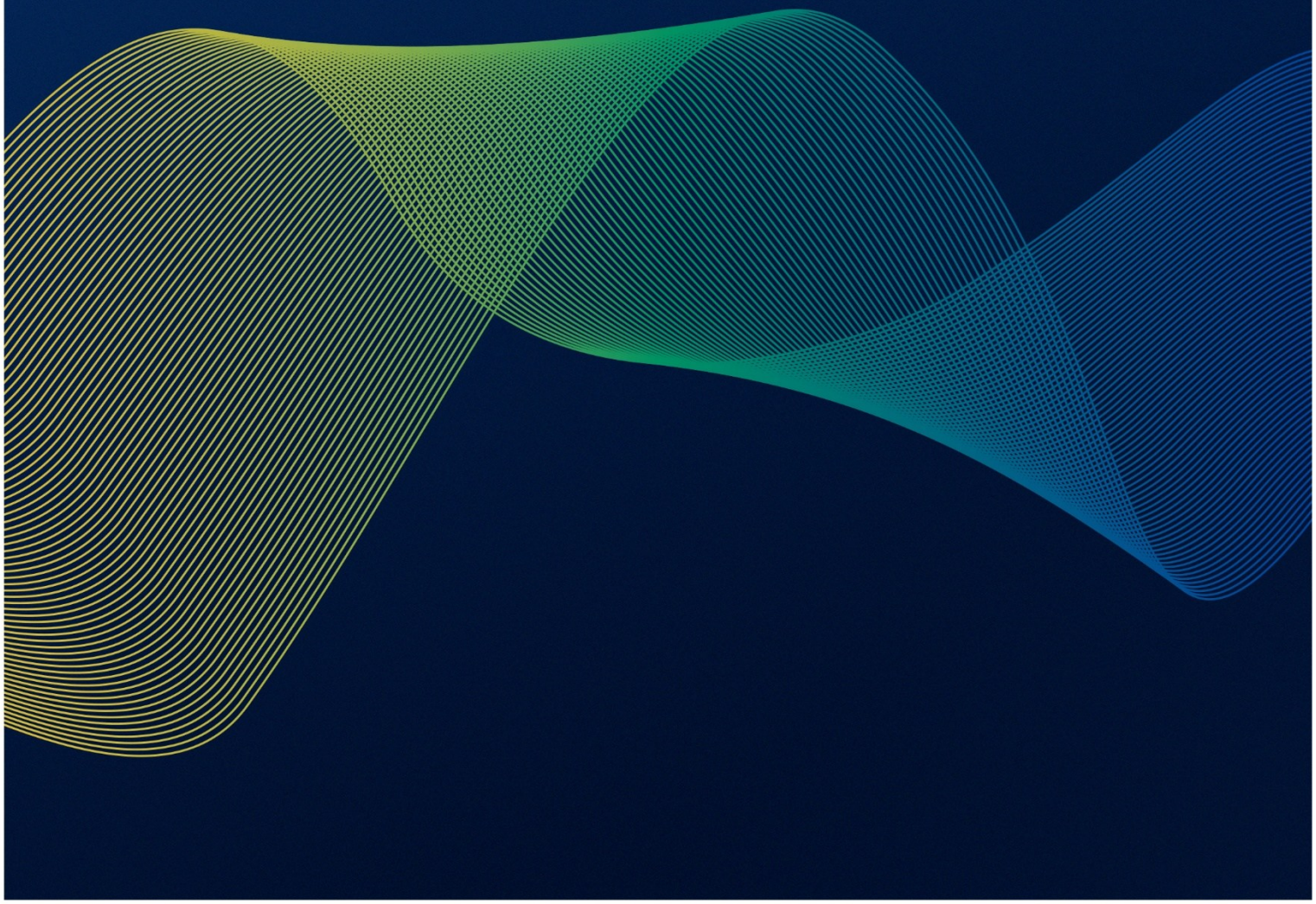
Australian Government

ATEC
Australian Tertiary Education Commission

University of New England

2027 mission based compact between the ATEC and University of New England



Preface

This mission based compact is established between the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and University of New England in accordance with the *Universities Accord (Australian Tertiary Education Commission) Act 2026* (ATEC Act). This mission based compact highlights the significant contributions University of New England 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 University of New England. 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 University of New England's goals, missions and strategic plan, geographic location and local community, as well as the effect (if any) the proposed terms may have on University of New England's academic freedom.

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

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

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

The University of New England (UNE) was founded in 1938 as Australia's first regional university, established to do what conventional universities could not or would not do for communities distant from metropolitan centres. Consistent with this heritage, UNE's vision is to be an unconventional university that excels at connecting individual aspirations to community outcomes. UNE's purpose is to support individuals and communities to thrive by creating and sharing knowledge.

UNE is founded on Country stewarded for millennia by its Traditional Owners. UNE recognises the enduring strength of Indigenous knowledge systems and is committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, leaders and people to realise rights to education and to embed Indigenous Knowledges, culture and languages within the University.

UNE's distinctive contribution is shaped by place and delivery model: a strong regional base in Armidale, a growing presence in Tamworth, a metropolitan presence in Parramatta (continuing to support the Western Sydney Community who represented the largest cohort responding to the offerings of UNE when we separated from the University of Sydney in 1954) and a long-standing capacity to deliver high-quality distance and later digital education. For more than 70 years, UNE has served learners who are First Nations, first in family, from regional, rural and remote Australia, from low socio-economic backgrounds, and mature-age learners studying part-time while working and caring.

Research is central to UNE's identity as a university and to delivering public value for regional Australia. It creates knowledge, strengthens teaching, and translates into practical benefits through partnerships with communities, industry and government. Research training grows the workforce and national capability, supporting long term economic, social and environmental resilience.

Over the past decade, UNE has experienced some instability and disconnect from its founding mission. UNE's Strategic Plan 2026-2035 seeks to remedy this by addressing underlying cause in our operating model and by confronting the changing context facing the sector (including shifting community expectations, funding reforms, and the emergence of new knowledge technologies such as AI). UNE will strengthen its role as a public institution delivering public value, with academic freedom central to institutional excellence. UNE will lift outcomes for learners by improving foundational excellence in teaching and support, deepening community collaborations, and transitioning to an operating model capable of delivering quality education and research at scale for diverse cohorts and communities, ultimately delivering financial sustainability.

Enrolment strategy and priorities

The impact of metropolitan universities going online during COVID, low unemployment rates post-COVID and policy changes such as Job-ready Graduates (JRG) have had substantial negative impacts on UNE's domestic student load. For example, enrolments in UNE's Bachelor of Arts have declined by more than 50% on 2020 (pre-JRG) enrolments.

Significant work commenced in 2024 to rebuild the UNE's domestic student load in a manner which aligns with the intention of the Universities Accord report and UNE's Strategic Plan. While there have been strong early improvements in the load trajectory, it is anticipated that existing initiatives such as investment in college refurbishment in Armidale and regional outreach in Tamworth will have a larger impact from 2027 onwards alongside other new initiatives under the Strategic Plan.

Table 1: UNE domestic undergraduate Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP) load in Equivalent Full-Time Student Places (EFTSL), including Fee-Free Uni Ready (FFUR), Medical Places and demand driven First Nations, from 2023-27.

CSP	2023	2024	2025	2026 (projected)	2027 (forecast)
Commencing EFTSL	2,918	2,996	3,497	3,663	3,919
Continuing EFTSL	5,611	5,544	5,487	5,794	6,200
Total	**8,529**	**8,540**	**8,984**	**9,457**	**10,119**

Student mix (and cohorts of focus)

UNE will continue to serve a predominantly domestic cohort with strong representation of regional and remote, low SES, First Nations and mature-age learners, including students studying at distance and part-time. UNE will strengthen its school-leaver pipeline across the New England North West, while maintaining pathways for lifelong learners and career-changers.

Course mix (and priority growth areas)

To ensure that UNE has a course portfolio fit for purpose (including our financial sustainability), we have established principles for reform and renewal aimed at meeting the market and the strategic needs of our communities. This will reinforce our historical strengths and see UNE take responsibility for its share of deep national discipline excellence. To increase the attractiveness of UNE, improve student experiences and retain those learners who commence, we must listen to them. UNE's learners are not predominantly school leavers, and we need to improve our efforts to attract and retain more learners.

In 2027, UNE's revitalized, AI-native foundations course (supported by FFUR) will become a core pathway into undergraduate study to ensure that any students who are underprepared are supported to thrive in their studies.

Campus locations and delivery modes

UNE's headquarters and main academic and residential campus is in Armidale, with a new campus due to open for Trimester 1 in 2028 in Tamworth. UNE will maintain its established metropolitan presence in Parramatta. Under our new Strategic Plan, we will continue to invest in a high-quality digital education experience complemented by place-based engagement and learning opportunities where educationally appropriate.

UNE will focus on lifting attainment and participation through outreach, enabling pathways, and partnerships that connect learning to employment and community outcomes for all Australians. In the New England North West catchment area, population has remained stable overall and therefore to increase enrolments, and ultimately graduates, a shift in perspective in relation to who we need to attract is needed.

To build significant numbers of prospective university students from equity backgrounds in our region, we need to change the perspective of the market. University needs to be seen as a welcoming place where people from all skills and education backgrounds are accepted. To enable people to transition into university, a shift away from the deficit model of basic skills preparation to a model whereby existing skills and curiosity can be recognised, will be important. As part of UNE's new curiosity-based approach to foundational learning (supported by FFUR), students are asked to express curiosity about learning so that their interest and prior skills are given respect in a new bespoke AI native learning system.

Although it is inherently difficult to predict the response to this change of attitude, UNE will target specific known cohorts in 2027. Our focus to date has been on Tamworth where we have a strategic goal to increase bachelor level education attainment rates from less than 15%. We will apply the same approach across the New England North West over time.

International education (high level)

UNE will reframe international engagement toward mutually beneficial relationships, diversified markets, and alignment with government priorities, including partnership-based delivery where appropriate.

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

UNE is a nationally significant regional university headquartered in Armidale NSW. Aligned with national priorities we focus on teacher education, health, agriculture and resource management, digital humanities and renewable technologies. UNE has a long record of linkage with VET providers, working collaboratively to reduce friction and increase student success. We will continue to focus our teaching, partnerships and place-based delivery on areas of priority where regional Australia needs sustained supply. This includes working with regional businesses to grow their productivity by embracing AI in their operations, thereby delivering on national, state and regional priorities in the economy. We will equip all learners with human-centred digital capability, including ethical and applied use of artificial intelligence, while protecting academic freedom and maintaining quality outcomes for a diverse student cohort. Through improving our foundational excellence and community collaborations we will harmonise regional needs with national priorities through a focus on climate change, net zero, digital/IT and manufacturing.

Action

Throughout 2027 UNE will undertake a range of activities in line with the Interim Statement of Strategic Priorities, contributing towards the National Tertiary Education Objective (NTEO). This includes finalising and implementing an integrated workforce plan for priority fields. This will include a curriculum refresh to embed regional practice readiness, work-integrated learning and consistent support for online, blended and intensive delivery. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on success and retention in the Nursing, Teaching Education, Agriculture and Behavioural Science Fields of Education (FoEs), and consequential outcomes for regional workforces nationally.

In response to regulatory changes, UNE will continue the implementation of initiatives that seek to deliver on social issues of national significance such as UNE's colleges review, Gender-Based Violence Response and Prevention Plan, addressing Racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism in universities. It is anticipated that this will have a positive impact on enrolments and retention across all priority FoEs.

Consistent with priorities for tertiary education in NSW, UNE will expand place-based pipeline activity across the New England North West and Western Sydney, including strengthened schools and VET engagement, targeted outreach for First Nations and equity cohorts, and clear pathways into undergraduate and postgraduate study. This initiative is expected to contribute to improved student pathways between school, tertiary education and the workforce across all priority FoEs and contribute to the overarching priority tertiary harmonisation.

Core to delivering on UNE strategic plan and mission as a regional university we will establish our Live and Work to Learn Community Collaboration that connects students to local workforce demand with an initial two partnerships to support 50 students. While partnerships are to be confirmed, this initiative is expected to have a positive impact on success and retention in one or more of the Nursing, Teaching Education, Agriculture and Behavioural Science FoEs.

As part of our Community Collaborations, we will implement a framework for alliances linked to the New England Renewable Energy Zone and establish partnerships with key stakeholders. This is consistent with our commitment to national priorities in climate change and Net Zero and supporting new manufacturing and digital business opportunities.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
0109 Biological Sciences				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	532	663	By 2030 UNE will maintain consistent growth in courses in Biological Sciences
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	77.83%	81.80%	Success rate above 85% by 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	61.71%	63.71%	By 2030 UNE aims to improve retention to 70% in biological sciences
0501 Agriculture				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	663	682	To increase enrolments and market share of enrolments in Agriculture by 2030.
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	89.01%	90.00%	Remain stable by end 2027
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	69.17%	71.17%	Retention rate to increase to 75% by 2030
0603 Nursing				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	582	630	Consistent growth in regional enrolments to 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	91.61%	92.00%	Existing high success rate to remain stable by end 2027
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	74.43%	76.43%	Retention rate to increase to >80% by 2030
0701 Teacher Education				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	2,620	2,906	Consistent increase in regional student enrolments in teacher education through to 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	85.34%	89.70%	Success rate to increase and maintain at 90% through to 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	70.36%	72.36%	Retention rate to increase to >75% by 2030
0907 Behavioural Science				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	690	725	Sustained growth in Behavioural Sciences to 2030
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	82.41%	86.60%	Success rate to increase to 90% by 2030
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	71.03%	73.03%	Retention rate to increase to >75% by 2030

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

A core focus of UNE's strategic plan is Upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rights in, to and through education. This is informed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This will position the University as a support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to access and realise lifelong education goals that meet their aspirations.

UNE's vision is to uphold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights to education through genuine self-determination in university governance, strategy and delivery. In 2027, we will strengthen First Nations leadership in decisions that materially affect Indigenous students, embedding Indigenous Knowledges and on-Country perspectives, and provision of culturally safe, flexible pathways and support for First Nations learners studying on campus, online and in community. Our focus is sustained improvement in access, success and retention aligned with Closing the Gap and local community aspirations.

Action

UNE will strengthen First Nations leadership and self-determination by confirming a First Nations governance mechanism with a clear remit to review and advise on policies, investments and major decisions affecting Indigenous students, staff, curriculum and research. The mechanism will operate through the Office of the PVCI, relevant key stakeholders and internal committees – including the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) committee, as required under ISSP funding conditions, alongside other relevant University committees – with defined reporting lines into the University's governance architecture. This is a significant undertaking of the Strategic Plan, aligns with sector expectations and is expected to contribute positively to Indigenous student enrolments, retention and success.

UNE will continue to support community-designed pathways, including outreach to regional schools, TAFE and community settings; and strengthened alternative entry and FFUR pathways that support transition into undergraduate study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As part of our focus on rights in education, UNE will implement a targeted early-intervention and mentoring approach for First Nations students who are academically at risk, delivering direct academic support – specialist tutoring and tailored academic assistance informed by student data and identified need – alongside proactive contact and culturally safe advising, consistent with our approach to foundational curiosity-based learning. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on retention and success rates for First Nations students. Similarly, work to progress flexible delivery and on-Country learning options where appropriate, including scoping and planning for place-based intensives, digital support and study arrangements that recognise cultural, family, community and work obligations. This initiative is designed with First Nations students at the centre and is expected to have a positive impact on enrolments, retention and success rates for First Nations students. In 2027, we will maintain and review pastoral supports that reduce barriers to participation, including accommodation, scholarships and financial assistance, dedicated cultural and social spaces, and navigation and referral to specialist services, and strengthen cultural safety capability among staff and students.

Work is underway to continue the progressive embedding of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in curriculum, undertaken in discipline-specific ways, led by relevant faculty leaders and guided and advised by the Office of the PVCI, with oversight through relevant academic governance committees. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on success rates for First Nations students and for all students.

Finally, UNE acknowledges the imperative to continue and scale-up activity in response to ongoing issues of racism as identified in the *Racism@Uni* survey. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on First Nations students, staff and more broadly, our regional communities.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
First Nations total enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	742	821	Load target to be achieved by end 2027
First Nations success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	70.80%	73.47%	Success rate to increase in line with internal target by end 2027
First Nations retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	60.82%	61.82%	Retention rate to increase slightly by end 2027

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

UNE is a university of universal opportunity, where regionality, low income, disability or distance are not barriers to attainment. This means we respond to the aspirations and intersectional needs of our students as individuals.

As part of our ongoing commitment to all those who aspire to study, we will strengthen access pathways, participation and student success for under-represented cohorts through enabling education, flexible multi-modal delivery, culturally and disability-inclusive design, and targeted wrap-around support. Consistent with UNE's founding purpose and the broader sector equity priorities and targets, we will focus on improving retention and success for domestic undergraduate students from low SES, regional and remote backgrounds and students with disability.

Action

During 2027, UNE will maintain a focus on supporting all students at UNE, regardless of their background and intersectionality to succeed through bespoke support opportunities. This includes expanding enabling and alternative entry pathways, including building demand for a new ability affirming approach to our pathways course, with targeted outreach and recruitment across the New England North West, Western Sydney and other priority regions to lift participation from equity cohorts. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on enrolments for equity students.

A key deliverable in 2027 will be to embed inclusive course design and accessible learning resources as a default across delivery modes, supported by staff capability development and continuous improvement processes. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on enrolments, success and retention for equity students.

To ensure that we remain accessible to this market we will maintain and enhance place-based access supports, including regional portals and partnerships (for example, with study hubs, schools, TAFE, local government and employers) that enable students to study closer to home and connect learning to local opportunity. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on enrolments, success and retention for equity students. Similarly, by developing Live and Work to Learn arrangements outlined in UNE's strategic plan, to provide wrap-around support for equity students, including options for accommodation, paid placements or local employment pathways aligned with study, and strengthened peer and community connection, we anticipate that more students will be able to remain in, and complete their studies sooner. By ensuring the ethical, culturally safe and inclusive adoption of artificial intelligence and data-informed systems across teaching, learning and institutional decision-making, including reviewing AI tools, learning analytics and automated processes for bias affecting under-represented cohorts – including students from low SES, regional and remote backgrounds, students with disability and First Nations students.

Measure

Indicator	Cohort	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Total enrolments	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2025	3,045	3,244	Load target to be achieved by end 2027
Total enrolments	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2025	3,559	3,773	Load target to be achieved by end 2027
Total enrolments	Regional	HESC – Verified 2025	5,510	5,841	Load target to be achieved by end 2027
Total enrolments	Remote	HESC – Verified 2025	276	294	Load target to be achieved by end 2027
Success	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	73.84%	76.85%	Success rate to increase in line with internal target by end 2027
Success	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	77.16%	80.10%	Success rate to increase in line with internal target by end 2027
Success	Regional	HESC – Verified 2024	80.70%	84.80%	Success rate to increase in line with internal target by end 2027
Success	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	79.72%	83.80%	Success rate to increase in line with internal target by end 2027
Retention	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	66.59%	67.09%	Retention rate to increase slightly by end 2027
Retention	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	66.61%	67.61%	Retention rate to increase slightly by end 2027
Retention	Regional	HESC – Verified 2024	69.17%	70.17%	Retention rate to increase slightly by end 2027
Retention	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	66.34%	67.34%	Retention rate to increase slightly by end 2027

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

UNE will maintain a clear line of sight from teaching quality to learner outcomes and community impact, consistent with our Strategic Plan. Improvement of teaching based on measurement of outcomes and professional development. UNE has pioneered innovative forms of learning and teaching since establishment and has maintained excellence in this regard. UNE's vision is to be a learner-focused university recognised for high-quality teaching across all forms of delivery, and for creating safe, supportive learning environments.

We will strengthen the professional recognition of teaching, equip staff and students to use new knowledge technologies responsibly, and redesign learning and assessment to support success for an increasingly diverse cohort.

Action

UNE recognises high quality teaching through a variety of mechanisms. At an individual unit level UNE recognises high-quality teaching through unit commendations in each teaching period. Commendations are given to staff involved in the delivery of units that achieve an overall success indicator score in UNE's institutional evaluation system of 4.5 out of 5. Teaching excellence is also recognised through an institutional teaching awards process, consisting of School, Faculty and University level education excellence citations that are open to all staff involved in educational activities, including academic, professional, sessional and casual staff. The education excellence citation process includes mentoring and guidance to enable staff reflect-on and identify key drivers of their excellence. Finally, UNE has an institutional process to support staff in attaining Advance HE Fellowship status, both to recognise educational excellence, and to provide developmental opportunities for staff. This process is centrally managed and support and is open to all UNE staff engaged in educational activities.

In 2027, our focus will be on implementing UNE's AI and digital capability program for staff, covering ethical and applied use of AI, assessment design and academic integrity, while respecting academic freedom and disciplinary autonomy. This initiative will support the development of teaching practice in line with addressing emerging challenges with AI and is expected to have a positive impact on teaching quality and engagement, student support and services and peer engagement.

By improving the design and consistency of learner support for online and blended cohorts through proactive engagement, timely feedback, strengthened learning resources and peer connection opportunities. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on student support and services and peer engagement.

Progress a sustainable teaching workforce model that supports quality delivery at scale, including appropriate support and development for sessional staff to support a consistent student experience.

Implement next phase of UNE's course portfolio review and reform to meet learner needs and improve learner experience. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on all measures through a targeted review of first year units to ensure that the needs of UNE's diverse student cohorts are being me through appropriate design, delivery and assessment.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Overall educational experience	QILT SES – Verified 2025	83.1%	84.1%	Strong performance against this indicator to be maintained
Teaching quality and engagement	QILT SES – Verified 2025	84.6%	85.6%	Strong performance against this indicator to be maintained
Student support and services	QILT SES – Verified 2025	76.7%	80.0%	Strong performance against this indicator to be maintained
Learner/peer engagement	QILT SES – Verified 2025	28.2%	30.2%	Ongoing improvement to 2030, noting the indicator focuses on on-campus and not online engagement

Joined-up tertiary system

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

Vision

UNE's vision is a tertiary system that is easier for learners to navigate, with seamless movement between VET and higher education and transparent, timely credit recognition.

In 2027, UNE will strengthen partnerships with VET providers, especially in regional NSW, to create bi-directional pathways aligned with workforce priorities and lifelong learning. We will focus on maximising appropriate credit for incoming VET learners, improving information for prospective students, and ensuring students who articulate with credit are well supported to succeed.

Action

As UNE expands its campus footprint in the Tamworth region it will be vital that we ensure we can provide a smooth transition between workforce participation, VET learning and higher education to meet the needs of that community. To do this UNE will: review and strengthen credit recognition and articulation arrangements with national, state and local VET providers, including updating credit precedent information and improving pre-enrolment advice so students can make informed choices. To deliver this we will progress partnerships with TAFE NSW and other regional VET providers to build pathways into a minimum of five (5) bachelor courses in priority fields (including education, health and other areas aligned to local workforce needs). UNE looks forward to proactively to adopting the National Credit Recognition Framework as it is finalised, which will guide further development of internal policy, processes and communication to students.

To provide greater flexibility for our learners, we are piloting nested and collaborative qualifications and micro-credentials that support step-on, step-off learning and enable learners to move between sectors across their working lives. This is critical for our student cohort – many of whom are mature learners with existing professional and caring commitments.

To achieve the above, enhancement of institutional reporting for VET articulation indicators (credit granted, admissions on the basis of VET, and outcomes for these students) to support evidence-based improvement and future compact targets.

UNE has a strong record of enrolments from learners with VET qualifications. There are a range of courses areas of high workforce skill demand where we will seek to further enhance pathways to success for our students. In 2027 we will investigate each of the focus areas and systematically remove points of friction or barriers to rapid success for these priority areas. All initiatives are expected to have a positive impact on the number of students enrolled on the basis of VET qualifications and the volume of credit awarded to students with VET qualifications.

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	UNE internal admissions data (2025)	64 credit points or 37% of degree's total credit points	40% of total credit points	Credit averages to remain steady by end 2027
Domestic students admitted to a bachelor course on the basis of VET	UNE internal admissions data (2025)	888 (9% of total bachelor admissions)	10% of total bachelor admissions	Admissions to remain steady by end 2027

Research

Sustaining national capability and supporting innovation through research and research training

Vision

UNE's vision is research and research training that delivers public value for regional communities and national capability, while remaining internationally competitive in our areas of strength. We will strengthen research partnerships connected to UNE's Community Collaborations, with focus on challenges relevant to regional Australia including agriculture and food security, education, health, climate and the Net Zero transition, and digital and AI-enabled futures. We will also build a stronger domestic Higher Degree by Research (HDR) pipeline and support successful completions.

Action

During 2027, UNE will progress a research partnership pipeline aligned to UNE's Strategic Plan, including collaborations with regional communities, industry and government that translate research into practical benefit.

To build the domestic HDR pipeline UNE will invest in promoting the HDR internship program with prospective and current students and key internal and external partners to increase linkages between industry, communities and UNE. Through this process, we will prioritise partnerships and projects that support national and regional needs, including in agriculture and food security, education, health, climate and the Net Zero transition, and digital and AI-enabled innovation.

To deliver better HDR support and completion outcomes UNE will undertake research culture improvements, supervisor development, candidate milestone monitoring, cohort-building activities and strengthened research training and wellbeing supports, including for students studying remotely. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on HDR completions.

UNE is committed to upholding research integrity and capability to keep pace with new technologies, including guidance and support for responsible use of AI in research and research training. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on HDR completions.

We will Continue to invest in strengthening research performance across a range of indicators in areas aligned to national, state and regional priorities. This initiative is expected to have a positive impact on HDR enrolments.

UNE is supportive of ATEC giving further consideration to persistent system wide issues that make HDR study unattractive for Australia domestic students.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
HDR domestic enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	418	451	Load target to be achieved by end 2027
HDR domestic completions	HESC – Verified 2024	64	66	Number of completions to remain steady with current trend

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.