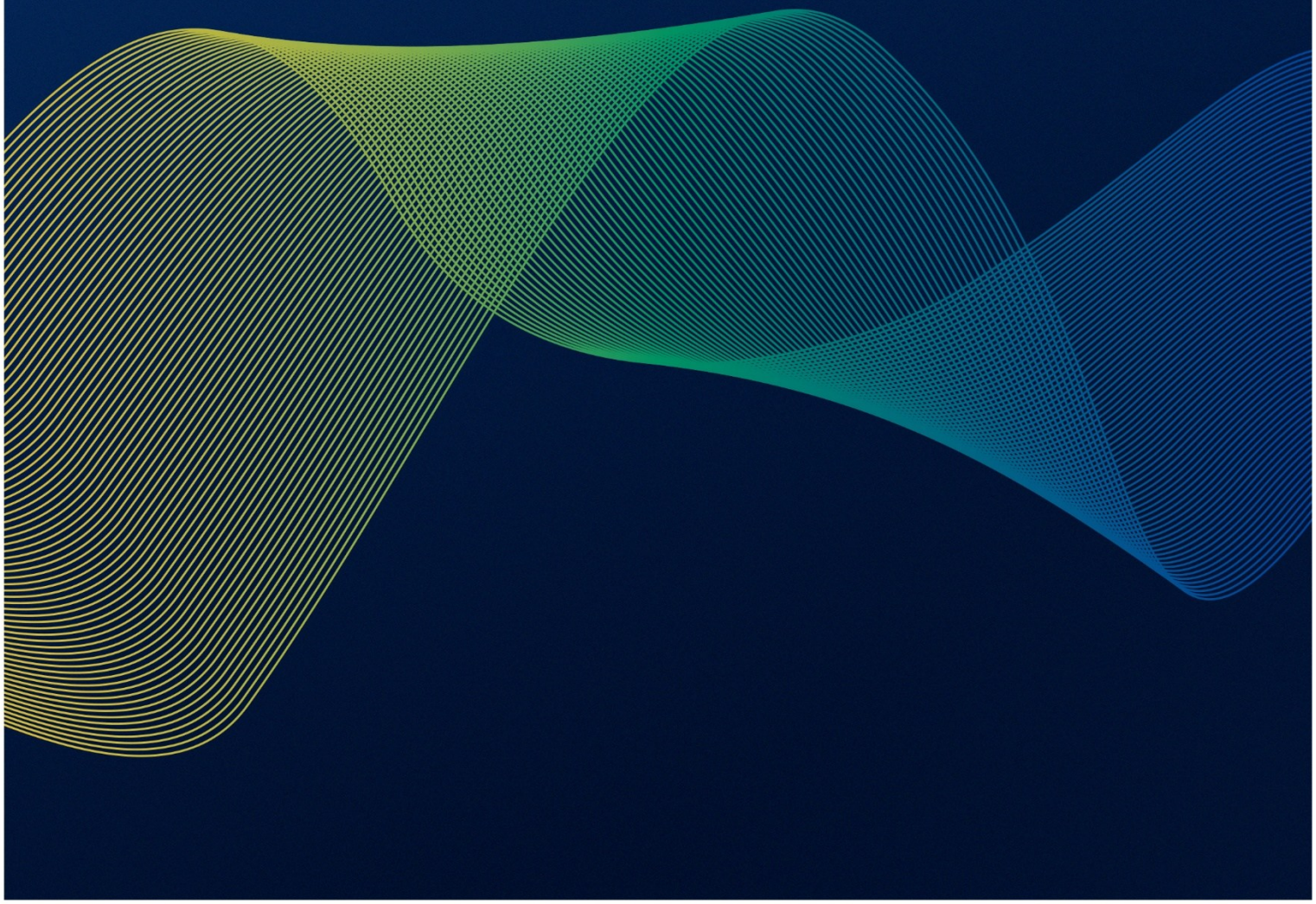
Australian Government

ATEC
Australian Tertiary Education Commission

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

2027 mission based compact between the ATEC and Victoria University



Preface

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

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

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

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

Victoria University's (VU) Strategic Plan 2022–2030 sets a purposeful ambition: to be a world leading impact-driven university by 2030. We measure success by the difference we make to people's lives, communities and Australia's tertiary system – see our 2025 Impact Report.

Located in Melbourne's West, one of Australia's fastest-growing and diverse regions, VU serves communities where educational aspiration is high, but participation has historically lagged state and national averages. This challenge shapes our mission. We exist to unlock talent wherever it is found, particularly amongst equity cohorts – First Nations students, regional learners, and those first-in-family to attend university. We pursue growth in order to increase participation, social mobility and workforce capability in areas of national importance.

As a leading dual-sector university, VU already delivers the joined-up tertiary system envisaged by the Universities Accord. Through our 'One VU' design, students move seamlessly between vocational and higher education (HE) through shared systems, integrated pathways and a single student experience. Through our Pathways to VU, including Packaged Pathways, Credit and Foundation courses, students can enrol once and progress smoothly from TAFE to higher education. VU is increasingly operating as a triple-sector institution, connecting schools, vocational education, higher education and research into a lifelong learning ecosystem centred on student success. Our Tech Schools in Wyndham and Brimbank exemplify this approach, building aspiration and pathways to future study and careers. We are equally committed to widening opportunity beyond metropolitan Melbourne through regional scholarships, flexible delivery, VU Online and strengthened community partnerships.

This integrated model positions VU to contribute directly to Australia's future workforce needs. We are already one of Victoria's largest contributors to the health and education workforce and are focusing future growth in national priority areas including housing and construction, information technology, cyber security, advanced manufacturing and climate transition. Our Flipped Campus model places industry allies at the centre of teaching, research and workforce development through partnerships, such as with Western Health and Ambulance Victoria. These are campuses and workplaces; connecting study directly to careers while addressing workforce shortages and delivering real-world impact. Combined with our Course Modernisation program, which brings together academic expertise, industry allies and pedagogical innovation, this approach ensures VU is helping build the workforce capability required for Australia's economic and social future.

Our future is anchored in equity for excellence, and excellence in equity. The VU Block Model®, First Year College® and wraparound support have vastly improved outcomes for students from equity backgrounds. While retention remains a challenge for some disciplinary cohorts, enhanced student support and our Student Experience Plan, we are focused on ensuring more students progress and succeed.

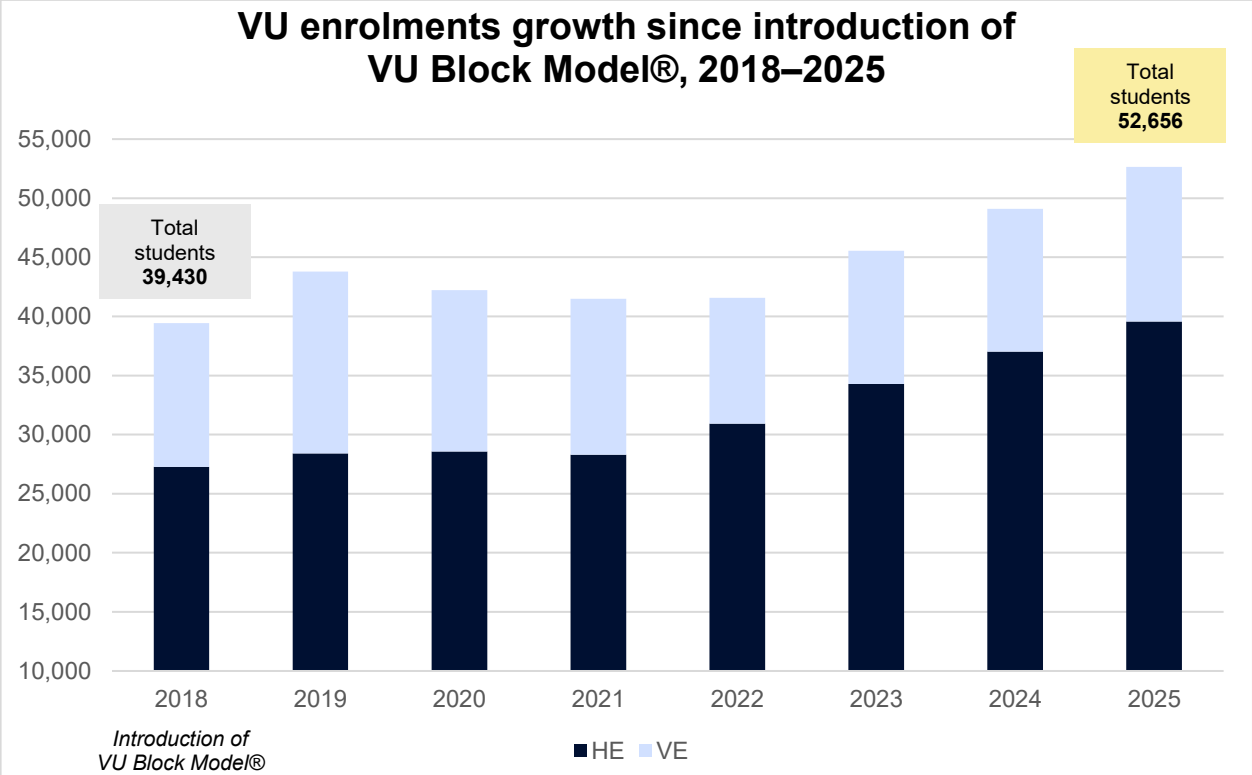
Central to our mission is First Nations self-determination. Through Protecting Country and our First Nations Action Plan, we are embedding First Nations leadership across governance, curriculum, research and decision-making. Our research is grounded in impact, focused on addressing real-world challenges while strengthening Australia's future research capability. Through new fellowships, stronger Higher Degree by Research (HDR) pathways and closer connections between vocational education, higher education and research, we are supporting the next generation of researchers and innovators.

Enrolment strategy and priorities

VU is growing fast, with ambitions to increase beyond 60,000 by 2031, reflecting strong demand for a model designed for student success and workforce relevance. Priorities:

- **Participation-led growth:** VU educates a diverse student community and seeks to expand access for learners traditionally underrepresented in tertiary education. Our higher education (HE) equity participation rate is 36.5%, and over 41% are the first in their family to attend university – the highest rate amongst urban universities in the nation*. Success rates exceed 92%. Growth is not just measured by enrolments, but by student educational, social and employment outcomes.
- **Equity and access:** Our offer spans on-campus, blended and online study, VU TAFE, the VU Block Model and First Year College. Brand research in 2025 found that 56% of prospective HE respondents identified the VU Block Model as the key reason for choosing VU, rising to 62% among students living in Melbourne's West. Through VU Online, VU is expanding opportunities for regional and remote learners. Direct-entry pathways now account for around three-quarters of commencing students, supported by initiatives such as VU Early Entry and scholarships that reduce financial and practical barriers to participation. Finally, VU offers a range of equity, access and pathway scholarships, with a focus on financial and practical assistance.
- **Seamless pathways:** VU removes barriers between vocational and higher education. Through FFUR at VU, Free TAFE, credit recognition and Packaged Pathways, students can move between sectors without losing credit or momentum. Students apply once through a shared enrolment platform and are supported into the pathway that best suits their goals. Sixteen Free TAFE courses map directly into a degree, while our Pathway Guarantee provides diploma graduates with immediate, full credit entry into the second year of 30 eligible bachelor programs. Our Simple Credit initiative further improves access by providing faster, more transparent and cost-effective credit outcomes. Pathway demand is growing strongly at VU. Our data shows that Fee-Free Uni Ready (FFUR) students perform in line with direct degree entrants and for Diploma students they outperform them and are more likely to stay.
- **Triple sector:** VU is extending its dual-sector advantage by connecting secondary education, vocational education, higher education and research into a single learner journey. Our Tech Schools in Wyndham and Brimbank demonstrate how aspiration, pathways and workforce participation can be integrated from school through to advanced study, at a time when the popularity of the Vocational Major in Victorian secondary schools has gone up dramatically.
- **Industry-integrated learning:** Through our Flipped Campus model, VU places industry partners at the centre of teaching, research and workforce development. Partnerships with Western Health at the new Footscray Hospital and Ambulance Victoria through the Centre of Excellence in Paramedicine connect students directly to workplaces and career opportunities, ensuring courses remain closely aligned to industry and community needs. We have 18 fully-embedded partnerships, with organisations such as Microsoft, Orygen and headspace, SAP and MUFG.
- **Our international community:** We are building a diversified international cohort, aligning with Government priorities that complements – rather than displaces – domestic opportunity.

**Source: Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success.*



Source: VU Annual Reports 2018-2025.

Table: Students from an Equity Background – 2025 Participation and Success

2025	Higher Education Equity*	Higher Education First-in-Family	Vocational Education Equity*
Participation Rate	36.5%	41.3%	52.8%
Success Rate	92.4%	93.8%	82.7%

Source: VU Annual Report 2025.

**Equity Rates: Aggregated measure that includes First Nations Peoples; Non-English Speaking Background; Disability; Low socio-economic status; Rural/ Remote. Excludes International.*

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

VU aims to be one of Australia's most effective dual-sector pipelines into priority jobs. We will use our integrated TAFE and HE model to expand participation, improve completion and meet Australia's future skills needs. Located in Australia's fastest-growing region, we will leverage our strengths in health and education while growing capacity in skills-stressed fields, such as IT, engineering and construction. Through the VU Block Model, seamless pathways and industry-integrated learning, VU is positioned to convert participation into highly employable graduates and workforce outcomes in State and National priority areas.

Action

- **Expanding participation:** Melbourne's West is one of Australia's fastest growing regions, yet tertiary participation remains below state and national averages. VU will expand participation in priority workforce fields including IT, Engineering, and Architecture and Building through targeted growth, strengthened pathways and place-based partnerships, particularly in Wyndham and East Werribee These initiatives will support participation growth and workforce.
- **Growing at scale:** VU's growth strategy is underpinned by a proven approach to student success – the VU Block Model. We will expand capacity in workforce shortage areas, including engineering, digital technologies, paramedicine, education and health. Courses remain industry-aligned and co-designed. VU Online extends access for working learners, regional students and those balancing study with other commitments, providing a scalable pathway to increase participation in areas critical to Victoria's and Australia's future workforce.
- **Student success:** Expanding participation must be matched by successful completion. Our Student Retention and Success Plan provides targeted support, with domestic retention increasing from 76.2% in 2022 to 84.3% in 2025. Notably, most equity cohorts now perform at or near parity. VU's future success will be measured not only by growth, but by the increasing TAFE vs HE ratio of enrolment – which will rise from 19.8% in 2026 to 30% in 2031.
- **Workforce outcomes through industry partnerships:** VU is one of Victoria's largest contributors to the health and education workforces. Student success rates are a phenomenal 94.27%. Through our Flipped Campus model, industry partners are embedded within teaching, research and workforce development. Partnerships with the Industry Collaborative Network at the VU City Tower; with Western Health; Western Bulldogs; and with CISCO and SAP, make our 'flipped campus' promise real for all students. VU's strongest pathways also support national priority areas, including cybersecurity, mental health and nursing.
- **A new workforce development model:** A $20 million co-investment with the Victorian Government, the Centre of Excellence in Paramedicine integrates VET, HE, industry and research in a single environment, including a First Nations stream. Delivered in partnership with Ambulance Victoria, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and Triple Zero Victoria, it strengthens education-to-employment pathways, while addressing critical workforce shortages.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
02 Information Technology				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	531	590	680 by 2031
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	86.57%	88%	90% by 2031
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	72.25%	75%	80% by 2031
03 Engineering and Related Technologies				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	281	310	350 by 2031
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	87.28%	88%	90% by 2031
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	62.28%	70%	80% by 2031
04 Architecture and Building				
Total student enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	679	750	850 by 2031
Success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	91.42%	92%	92% by 2031
Retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	67.41%	75%	80% by 2031

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

First Nations

First Nations leadership, access, participation and success

Vision

Victoria University's commitment to Protecting Country is enacted through its First Nations Action Plan and grounded in the key principle of self-determination. Our ambition is for First Nations peoples to see their knowledge, cultures and leadership reflected across the University – from governance and curriculum to research, partnerships and decision-making. We aim to achieve steady growth in participation while ensuring First Nations students succeed, are retained and complete at rates that match or surpass their peers. Central to this is Moondani Balluk, which provides cultural leadership and authority across VU and helps to translate aspiration into institutional change.

Action

- **Self-Determination:** Via our First Nations Action Plan and ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners and community organisations, VU is embedding First Nations leadership into governance. This ensures that First Nations voices, values and leadership remain central to institutional choices. Our First Nations Advisory Board comprises a majority of Indigenous members and is jointly chaired with the Vice-Chancellor.
- **Growing participation and pathways:** VU is expanding recruitment and transition pathways co-designed with Moondani Balluk, supported by targeted outreach, scholarships, enhanced digital engagement and tailored pathway programs. These initiatives are having an impact with TAFE and HE enrolments up 42% and 57% respectively. Indigenous leaders have access to a certificate-level community services course and tailored access to our Bachelor of Community Development degree is being designed.
- **Cultural safety and belonging:** Moondani Balluk provides culturally safe spaces, wraparound support and community connection for First Nations students and staff. This work is central to building belonging, improving student outcomes and creating an environment where First Nations people can thrive.
- **Truth-telling through curriculum:** Through the Decolonising to Indigenise Curriculum Project, VU is embedding First Nations perspectives across teaching and learning. Three mandatory curriculum modules support all academic staff to incorporate Indigenous content through a structured course design framework, reducing cultural load on First Nations staff while increasing institutional capability.
- **Indigenised spaces:** Moondani Balluk is home to the renowned Aboriginal History Archive. The new Campus Gateway extends a front door to the University connecting to Moondani Balluk, so First Nations presence is visible and paramount from the first point of entry. The potential for an on-campus Indigenous Land Use Agreement around the Iramoo native grasslands nursery is equally profound.
- **Research pathways:** We are strengthening First Nations research leadership through HDR scholarships, seeding grants and stronger supervisor capability. We are growing the unique Foley Collection and the Aboriginal History Archive, so this record sits in First Nations hands and is open to the next generation of First Nations researchers.
- **Deep community partnerships:** VU works alongside dozens of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, Traditional Owners and First Nations communities across Melbourne's West to ensure teaching, research, student recruitment and engagement are community-informed and aligned to local priorities. As an example, the Blak Women's Healing program is having on-going impact in policy and cultural practice.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
First Nations total enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	135	240	320 by 2031
First Nations success rate	HESC – Verified 2024	84.79%	85%	88% by 2031
First Nations retention rate	HESC – Verified 2024	67.80%	70%	80% by 2031

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

Equity

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

Vision

Equity is not a program at VU; it is our greatest strength. We have a 36.5% equity participation rate, and more than 41% of our students are first-in-family – both of these are the highest of any metropolitan university in Australia*. Importantly, these rates have remained strong as enrolments have grown by more than a third to record highs, demonstrating that participation, success and growth can be achieved together. Our ambition is not simply to widen access, but to ensure students from all backgrounds succeed, progress and graduate with the skills and confidence to transform their lives and communities.

**Source: Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success.*

Action

- **The VU Block Model** has completely redesigned learning around the students who higher education has historically underserved, including those from low SES, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, mature-age learners and students who are the first in their family to attend university. The Model combines one-subject-at-a-time study with embedded academic and wellbeing support. Success rates for students from equity backgrounds have reached 92.4%, while progression has increased from 75.4% (2017) to 91.1% (2024). VU has also risen from 37th to 6th nationally for student experience. By improving pass rates and reducing attrition, the model enables more students to complete sooner and enter the workforce earlier.
- **First Year College:** More than 41% of VU Higher Education students are the first in their family to attend university. These students are concentrated in communities where tertiary participation remains below state and national averages – and they will be critical to achieving Australia's long-term participation ambitions. Through the First Year College, every commencing undergraduate receives dedicated transition support, including the Start Well curriculum, designed to build confidence, belonging and early academic success.
- **From access to attainment:** 76% of VU students who move from VU TAFE to a degree at VU come from equity backgrounds. Through Packaged Pathways and FFUR programs, VU is removing traditional barriers between vocational and higher education and creating seamless progression opportunities. Demand continues to grow strongly, with pathway participation more than doubling since 2023. Diploma pathway students in Business and IT achieve higher retention, progression and academic outcomes than direct entrants, while FFUR pathway students perform at parity. In summary, VU has a larger cohort of Pathway students from TAFE than all other Victorian providers except RMIT and a 'top five' Australian success rate. We are the 'demonstrator model' for the Accord's tertiary harmonisation goals and our pathway students graduate faster into the workforce than any other dual-sector institution.

Measure

Indicator	Cohort	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Total enrolments	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2025	1,555	1,670	1,810 by 2031
Total enrolments	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2025	2,430	2,525	2,670 by 2031
Total enrolments	Regional	HESC – Verified 2025	1,145	1,210	1,310 by 2031
Total enrolments	Remote	HESC – Verified 2025	<5	<5	20 by 2031
Success	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	90.73%	91%	91% by 2031
Success	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	91.19%	92%	92% by 2031
Success	Regional	HESC – Verified 2024	93.51%	94%	94% by 2031
Success	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	83.33%	90%	90% by 2031
Retention	Students with disability	HESC – Verified 2024	67.90%	70%	80% by 2031
Retention	Students from low SES backgrounds	HESC – Verified 2024	71.11%	75%	80% by 2031
Retention	Regional	HESC –Verified 2024	67.26%	70%	80% by 2031
Retention	Remote	HESC – Verified 2024	Data not publishable	In line with regional retention rate	In line with regional retention rate by 2031

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

Quality teaching

Raising the quality and recognition of higher education teaching

Vision

At VU quality teaching underpins equitable student success. The VU Block Model has transformed the student experience through active, experiential learning. In 2024, VU exceeded the national average in five of six QILT SES measures, including teaching quality, peer engagement and skills development.

As one of Australia's most diverse universities, VU educates high proportions of students from equity and underrepresented backgrounds. Educational excellence and equity are mutually reinforcing, and high-quality teaching and proactive support are critical to improving graduate outcomes.

Guided by Protecting Country, VU is committed to ensuring every learner can succeed, regardless of background or circumstance.

Action

- **Teaching excellence for every learner:** VU's approach to teaching quality is anchored in continuous innovation and a commitment to equitable student success. Through our whole-of-University Course Modernisation project, VU is renewing curriculum, assessment and digital learning while aligning pathways across secondary, vocational, higher education and research. This strengthens our distinctive triple-sector model. At the same time, this work embeds First Nations knowledges, inclusive design, employability, work-integrated learning and industry engagement.
- **Developing exceptional educators:** High-quality teaching depends on hiring high-quality educators. VU adopts a whole-of-career approach to teaching capability, supporting professional development, scholarly practice, educational leadership and career progression through the Academic Performance Expectations Framework. Academic staff are supported through structured professional learning, including the Graduate Certificate in Block Teaching, which equips educators to deliver active, evidence-informed and inclusive learning experiences. Teaching excellence is further recognised through Teaching-Focussed Academic, promotion, leadership opportunities and institution-wide recognition of outstanding educational practice.
- **Leading innovation:** VU continues to strengthen its leadership in innovative education through the VU Block Model Academy. The Academy advances research, scholarship and evaluation of block learning globally, supports staff capability through communities of practice and professional learning. It also fosters national and international collaboration to share evidence-informed approaches to student success. Together with the Assessment Refresh Project and the Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards Framework, this work promotes authentic, secure and AI-aware assessment, strengthens digital learning, and drives continuous improvement through student feedback, graduate outcomes and academic quality processes. Guided by Protecting Country and a commitment to equity, VU is creating the conditions for every learner to thrive. Nations such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and India are all introducing the VU Block Model to their systems, with our guidance.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
Skills development	QILT SES – Verified 2025	85.4%	86%	86% by 2031
Student support and services	QILT SES – Verified 2025	73.2%	75%	78% by 2031

Joined-up tertiary system

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

Vision

VU demonstrates the joined-up tertiary system. It integrates vocational education, higher education and research within a single institution. Alongside triple-sector aspirations, enabling students to move seamlessly between sectors through connected pathways, shared systems and consistent support. Through One VU, barriers between VET and higher education are minimised, prior credit is fully recognised, and student pathways are simplified. VU is extending its model across the learner lifecycle, from Tech Schools to research, creating a connected triple-sector ecosystem that supports participation, attainment and workforce outcomes. Currently 925 students have pathwayed into VU Bachelor programs from other TAFE providers.

Action

- **One learner journey:** Students access VET and HE through a single enrolment platform and learner experience. Students apply just once, rank their preferred study options across both sectors simultaneously and are supported into the pathway that best aligns with their goals. This integrated model reduces complexity and enables seamless movement between VET and HE.
- **Pathways that improve attainment:** Since 2018, more than 2,600 students have transitioned from VET into HE. 76% of students transitioning from VU TAFE to HE come from equity backgrounds, demonstrating the critical role pathways play in expanding opportunity. Diploma pathway students achieve higher retention, progression and academic performance than direct entrants, while FFUR pathway students perform at parity. Mapping shows 30 TAFE courses articulate into 30 destination degrees, including 16 Free TAFE programs. Through Packaged Pathways, VU is further simplifying progression by creating a single enrolment and timetabling journey from TAFE to degree. We are the proven Australian leader in this form of Tertiary Harmonisation.
- **Seamless progression:** VU's strongest pathways support national workforce priorities – Cyber Security, Mental Health and Nursing each flow from a TAFE qualification into a related degree. The Centre of Excellence in Paramedicine represents the next phase of tertiary integration, bringing VET, HE, industry partnership and research together in a single environment. Delivered with Ambulance Victoria and other partners, it creates clear education-to-employment pathways. The same approach applies with our embedded partnership with Lifeline and Autism Spectrum Australia at our St Albans campus – responding acutely to the mental health crisis in Australia.
- **Maximise credit recognition:** As the ATEC builds its Tertiary System Roadmap, VU already operates many of the principles underpinning the National Credit Recognition Framework. Students completing eligible VU TAFE diplomas receive guaranteed credit into aligned bachelor programs, reducing duplication and accelerating progression. Through initiatives such as Pathway Guarantee and Simple Credit, VU is demonstrating how credit recognition can support participation, attainment and workforce readiness at scale – on average, VU students complete their degrees in 3.4 years, compared to a national median of 3.9 years.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
VU VET Pathway Commencing Enrolments	VU institutional data, 2025	260	380	550 by 2031
All VET Basis of Admission Commencing Enrolments	VU institutional data, 2025	1,200	1,300	1,650 by 2031

Research

Sustaining national capability and supporting innovation through research and research training

Vision

VU does research that changes lives in Melbourne's West and reaches the world. We focus our efforts in the thematic areas where we can shift real outcomes, and we are growing the talents of researchers to carry that work forward. As a truly joined-up university we offer a rare continuum found nowhere else: a single discipline can run from a TAFE certificate to a PhD. Our ambition is to grow a strong, diverse research workforce – with sovereign capability built from our own communities. Through this, we aspire to be recognised as one of the world's leading impact-driven universities by 2030.

Action

- **Grow and nurture talent:** Our Vice-Chancellor's Research and Impact Fellowships launched in 2025 and seek to grow the next generation of researchers. These outstanding appointments will drive research at VU. Our Early-Mid Career Researcher Academy – part of our researcher professional development program – provides targeted mentoring, skills development and collaboration at the pivotal stage where a research career is made or lost. Our HDR program has led to a 50% increase in HDR enrolments in 2026.
- **A unique research pipeline:** We draw research talent from communities that rarely attain a doctorate, because the route begins earlier in our system than elsewhere. Our embedded partnership with the Western Bulldogs at their Whitten Oval headquarters is an exemplar-with a full TAFE-to-PhD discipline offering, with Sports Science; Sports Technology and Women in Sports research as the standard-bearers. This is how we widen the HDR pool; by turning an applied, equity-rich student base into the start of research careers in fields such as Immunology, Gait Analysis, Extra-Cellular Vesicles; AI in Sports Leadership; Kinesiology; and Gender-Based Violence in Sport. For these reasons we are ranked 6th worldwide in Sports Science (ARWU 2025).
- **Research concentration:** We are activating 6 priority areas through thematic-led structures that bridge disciplines, two-way industry linkages and 'for purpose' grants that lift our standing in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. These are underpinned by our Research & Impact Plan 2023-2030.
- **Research culture:** The VU Research Building opened at the New Footscray Hospital in 2026, co-locating our researchers with frontline health workers, with joint industry grants in the pipeline. New interdisciplinary platforms go further: the proposed Centre for Thriving Childhoods – a place-based, 'Living Lab' backed by philanthropic co-investment – shows how we connect research, workforce and community need for new models of health promotion for young children. The emphasis on preventative and integrative health is a uniquely strong public health and research focus.

Measure

Indicator	Data source	Provider baseline	Milestone for 2027	Expected outcome and timeframe
HDR domestic enrolments	HESC – Verified 2025	341	360	510 by 2031

Section 3: Course and campus changes

Course closures

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Campus changes

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