



2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Victoria University

Purpose

This compact is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the University. Entering into a Compact is one of the quality and accountability requirements, which a higher education provider must meet under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) as a condition of receiving a grant. Specifically, subsection 19-110(1) of HESA requires that Table A and Table B providers must, in respect of each year for which a grant is paid to the provider under HESA, enter into a Mission -Based Compact with the Commonwealth for a period that includes that year.

All strategies should provide qualitative and/or quantitative measures of assessment.

Mission and Strategic Planning

Overall Mission, Strategic Plan, Outcomes and Metrics

Victoria University's Strategic Plan, *Start Well, Finish Brilliantly*, outlines our vision to be **one of the leading impact-driven universities in the world by 2030**.

Updated in 2025, the next five years includes a focus on:

- **Equity for excellence, and excellence in equity:** VU is the leading urban university in equity participation and success, supported by a distinctive mix of educational offerings – the VU Block Model®, First Year College®, VU TAFE, VU Online, and a diversified international cohort.
- **Unique-in-the-sector offers:** VU is uniquely positioned to bring together Higher Education, TAFE, industry, and research – particularly in VU's areas of strength in health, education, public policy, and cyber security, where pathways and upskilling are critical for addressing workforce and skills gaps.
- **Industry at the core:** We are a partnering University, as demonstrated by our “Flipped Campus” model. Put simply, our position is that unless each campus features at least one co-located ethical and aligned industry partner, it is not a campus.
- **Thematic, interdisciplinary research:** Moving from vertical structures to horizontal, thematic collaboration for greater impact – aligning with our discipline-strengths.

Metrics include:

- Leading national equity participation and success rates
- Increased completion rates and student employment outcomes
- Partnership advocacy and reputation

- Growth in research income and purpose-driven grants
- First Nations careers and success
- Enhanced student experience and staff engagement.

Key outcomes over the compact period include:

- **Health, Education and Employment Precinct:** The opening of the \$1.5bn new Footscray Hospital – connected by a footbridge to VU’s Footscray Park Campus and with a new VU Research Building – will form a major health, education, and employment precinct. In 2026, VU will launch Victoria’s first Behavioural and Lifestyle Medicine Lab with industry partners – creating a leading hub for preventative health and integrated care.
- **The Centre of Excellence in Paramedicine:** Opening in 2026 at VU’s Sunshine Campus, the Centre will train around 1,000 students annually in world-class simulation spaces. It features a partnership with Ambulance Victoria with joint research (as well as demonstrating our Flipped Campus model as they co-locate on campus) and will directly address occupational challenges in emergency services. A dedicated First Nations stream will further strengthen the Centre’s impact.
- **Brimbank Tech School (BTS):** Also opening in 2026 at Sunshine Campus, the BTS will offer free, hands-on STEM learning to 14,000 secondary students in the Brimbank area. Building on the success of Wyndham Tech School at VU’s Werribee Campus, the BTS will connect students to advanced technologies and the future of work.
- **A proposed skills powerhouse for Melbourne’s west:** Wyndham could become the leading skills accelerator in Melbourne’s west, and VU is actively working with key partners to shape a proposal that brings this vision to life – unlocking equitable access to education and fast-emerging workforce capabilities.
- **VU India:** In a Victorian first, VU has been licensed by the Indian Government to establish a comprehensive branch campus in India using the VU Block Model®. Opening in 2026, VU India will expand access to high-quality, student-centred education for learners facing geographic or financial barriers, with a model that has proven outcomes in retention, progression, and success.

Student and Staff Safety

The VU Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan and companion policy will commence in 2026, in compliance with the National Higher Education Code. Major actions will see the strengthening of functional alignment to optimise the Plan, implementation of improved reporting and analysis capabilities, and an integrated staff and student complaints process and system.

VU takes a trauma-informed, preventative approach to student safety operations. We offer direct case management, safety planning, and community-wide capability-building. Our 24/7 Student Mental Health Support Line has seen a 400% increase in usage since its expansion, with every student connected to counselling for follow-up care.

Further, VU is proud to have a five-year partnership with *Our Watch*, Australia’s national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children. Together, we are embedding prevention into curriculum and culture through the *Educating for Equality* and *Respect and Equality in TAFE* programs, supported by a dedicated research stream to drive systemic change.

Cyber and Data Security

VU's cyber strategy is practical and risk-based – protecting student and staff safety, research integrity, and institutional trust. Guided by the NIST Cybersecurity Framework and aligned with the Defence Industry Security Program, our actions include further strengthening governance, operational resilience, data protection, and a culture of shared accountability.

Links:

[Victoria University Annual Report 2024](#) (includes Speech and Academic Freedom Attestation Statement on p. 84)

[Freedom of Expression Policy](#)

[Foreign Interference Protocols](#) (being updated in 2025)

Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

VU is a bold and progressive dual-sector institution, demonstrated by two signal achievements:

- The **VU First Year College®** is a purpose-built entry experience, encompassing all disciplines and embedding transition and academic support into the core curriculum. Every undergraduate begins here, supported by specialist educators focused on building capability, confidence, and connection from day one.
- The **VU Block Model®** is the largest pedagogical innovation of its type in the world, where students study one subject at a time over four weeks, in small, workshop-style learner-centred classes. It supports students to build mastery and receive real-time feedback – creating active progress.

These pioneering approaches have reimaged the traditional university experience, with eight years of data demonstrating exceptional outcomes in academic performance and course completion – notably among students from equity backgrounds:

- Overall, student progress rates have risen from 75.4% in 2017 to 91.1% in 2024, far exceeding the national average of 76% (Department of Education 2023).
- VU has a student equity participation rate of 35.7%, with over 42% of students being first in their family to attend university – both the highest among urban-only universities in Australia.
- Success rates for equity and first-in-family students now exceed 92%, compared to the national equity average of 78.3% (Department of Education 2023).

First Nations Action Plan

The [First Nations Action Plan](#) is a whole-of-university commitment to drive positive and progressive change. Success measures are designed around the growth, retention and success of First Nations students and staff; research performance; and feedback from our partners and the First Nations community on how VU is honouring its commitment to Protecting Country.

In 2026, alongside the continued efforts into growing participation and success of First Nations students and staff, the focus of the Action Plan will be on meaningful involvement of Indigenous Elders with University Council; opportunities for the State's first Indigenous Land Use Agreement on a University campus; and continued work on the 'Indigenising the Curriculum Project'.

Further, Moondani Balluk is a culturally safe and supportive place for First Nations students and staff at Victoria University, and for the promotion of First Nations research, such as the Aboriginal History Archive, which is housed in the Moondani Balluk Centre at Footscray Park.

The Progressive Inclusivity Framework

This Framework unifies the critical work undertaken across several action plans – each significant in its own right, yet deeply interconnected. This includes accessibility; cultural, linguistic and religious diversity; LGBTIQ+; and gender equality. It ensures a genuine culture of respect, a shared objective of belonging, and the right policies, systems, leadership and actions to achieve this.

Work is underway on the Universal Design for Learning Program, enhanced scholarship offerings to support diverse student needs, and targeted outreach initiatives designed to strengthen engagement and success among underrepresented student groups.

Pathways from TAFE

As a dual-sector university, VU is uniquely positioned to offer seamless pathways into Higher Education. Notably, 76% of students transitioning from TAFE to a Higher Education degree at VU come from equity backgrounds. VU also offers a **Pathway Guarantee** that ensures students who successfully complete a Diploma qualification at VU TAFE can gain direct entry into the second year of eligible Bachelor programs.

Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

Victoria University is advancing a bold, future-focused agenda to elevate teaching quality and student success. A suite of strategic initiatives will continue to enrich the student experience, strengthen graduate outcomes, and drive positive results in future surveys.

Admissions

VU has long championed accessible education, recognising student potential beyond the ATAR. This commitment is reflected in new streamlined and student-centric systems that are making it easier to enrol.

Further, the **Early Entry Program** offers VCE students a university place prior to exams, providing certainty and motivation during a critical period. In 2024, the program was expanded to include a new inclusive scholarship scheme and early engagement with university life (e.g. access to campus facilities such as the gym and library).

Learning and Teaching Plans

Block 2.0 Implementation: A Strategic Review of the VU Block Model, completed in 2024, has guided the way forward in further innovation and improvement in this successful and unique pedagogical model. The revised *VU Block Model 2.0 Principles* are being embedded into practice to reflect contemporary pedagogy, digital delivery, generative AI, and cultural sensitivity to First Nations and equity cohorts. A focus for 2026 is delivering research that can extend the impact of this model – particularly in terms of equity – to the world.

Digital Learning Plan: VU aims to be a leader in innovative and inclusive digital learning, and the cornerstone of this plan is the Course Modernisation Project. This involves enhancements in industry-engaged learning, digital enrichment, and lifelong learning (e.g. harmonisation, multiple entry and exit points, microcredentials), with clear guidance for course design, class sizes, and flexibility. Co-designed with industry, students, and staff, the Course Modernisation Project has successfully

completed its pilot in Engineering, and is set to launch in 2026. Significant progress is already underway in IT, Cybersecurity, and Paramedicine; with Education and Health courses scheduled to commence in 2026.

Gen AI Action Plan: A major focus in 2026 is VU’s Assessment Refresh Project, which will streamline assessment, embed best-practice course design for learning outcomes, and drive the cultural shift needed to engage with AI meaningfully and ethically across the University. A pilot and stakeholder consultation was completed in 2025, with university-wide implementation occurring throughout 2026. This strategy will also involve a dedicated research program (focused on effective assessment practices in the Generative AI era, and to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy); as well as a professional development program to enhance AI literacy and capability among VU staff.

Graduate Employment Plan: Our industry partnerships have proven to be incredibly impactful in matched employment rates – seen with Western Health where 48% of graduate nurses are recruited from VU. The focus for 2026 will be to scale this model to ensure students gain the skills and qualifications needed to meet evolving workforce demands. Further, VU will continue to embed career development learning and industry-engaged work-integrated learning in all qualifications – connecting students to employers from day one and supporting successful transitions to employment

Academic Support and Early Intervention

VU recognises that effective and accessible academic support is central to student satisfaction, retention, and success. It is also worth noting that the VU Block Model – by design – is a tool for identifying ‘at-risk’ students earlier.

Key actions include:

- **Proactive onboarding:** Targeted preparation and transition programs, including Ready Skills Lab bootcamps, VU Start Well units (with embedded academic literacy support), early orientation, and in-class introduction to Learning Hub services (ongoing academic support).
- **At-risk student identification:** Predictive data models and learning analytics to identify at-risk students, with intervention triggers and triage into support tiers such as one-to-one guidance, counselling, and peer mentoring.
- **Targeted support:** Learning Advisors embedded within high-risk units, offering tailored workshops, after-class drop-ins, and discipline-specific support.
- **Flexible access:** Weekly drop-in sessions, one-to-one online appointments, and after-hours study help, plus online modules and self-paced resources.
- **Peer and community support:** Strengthening the Student Mentor program for discipline-specific guidance and peer-to-peer engagement.

Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Victoria University is driving research excellence, innovation, and capability development through a whole-of-institution, whole-of-career approach. Our mission is to deliver creative, measurable solutions that are adopted by governments, industries, and communities—locally and globally.

To guide this ambition, VU has identified six strategic research priorities:

- Innovating education and future-proofing Australia’s workforce

- Sport for elite performance, community engagement, and healthy living
- Health and wellbeing solutions
- Transforming communities through policy, practice, and governance
- Smart, sustainable, and liveable cities
- ‘By community, for community’ First Nations Knowledge.

Key outcomes for the compact period include:

VU Research Building (VURB) at the New Footscray Hospital: Embedded within the New Footscray Hospital in partnership with Western Health, the VURB exemplifies VU’s leadership in translational health research and cross-sector collaboration. This flagship facility enhances our capacity to attract world-class researchers, PhD candidates, and strategic investment from government and industry. The focus for 2026 will be the launch of the Behavioural and Lifestyle Medicine Lab, a first for the state.

Vice-Chancellor’s Research and Impact Fellowships (VCRIF): Launched in 2025, the VCRIF program has recruited four leading researchers in energy storage, brain health, peace and conflict studies, and neurological diagnostics. A second round will launch in 2026, expanding to an international search to further strengthen VU’s research depth and global reach.

Early-Mid Career Researcher Academy (EMCA): Launching in pilot form in 2026, the EMCA will serve as a dedicated capability hub for emerging researchers. Through targeted mentoring, skills development, and collaborative opportunities, the Academy will accelerate research performance, drive innovation, and enhance VU’s reputation. It will also support increased success in funding, publication, and commercialisation.

Industry Collaboration and Co-Investment: VU is actively developing new models of industry co-investment to diversify research funding and deepen strategic partnerships – particularly with those co-located across our campuses. Through collaborations with government (eg Breakthrough Victoria) and industry, VU is driving translational research and accelerating the commercialisation of technology and innovation. Research is embedded across major initiatives – including the Centre of Excellence in Paramedicine, the Brimbank Tech School, and Block 2.0 – ensuring that innovation is not siloed, but integrated across the University’s ecosystem.

Measures include:

- HDR enrolments and conferrals, completion rates, and satisfaction surveys.
- Value and number of commercialisation grants/contracts, industry partnerships, and technology transfer outcomes.
- Participation rates of equity cohorts, number of First Nations and equity-focused programs.
- Media mentions, policy influence, community engagement metrics, and research outputs.

Strategies for Engaging with Industry

As articulated in our Strategic Plan – VU is a partnering institution. We are actively cultivating strategic partnerships with leading and values-aligned organisations in high-growth sectors. These collaborations are central to VU’s mission of preparing students for the future of work and contributing to broader economic and social outcomes.

Key priorities:

Grow partnerships that align with strategic goals: VU's partners include a diverse range of industry leaders and community organisations, such as Microsoft, Western Health, Melbourne Airport, Western Bulldogs, CommUnity+, Greater Western Water, PEXA, and Western Chances. We have expanded our partnership portfolio, with new partnerships developed with cohealth, Mercy Health, Royal Flying Doctor Service and Westjustice. These partnerships include a clear focus on student opportunities – placements, internships and job, both while studying and upon graduation, and provide students with the knowledge and hands-on experience industry demands. Ensuring our continued growth in major alliances and partnerships, aligning with VU's education and research strengths, remains a priority for VU.

Strengthen the Flipped Campus Model: VU has a growing Flipped Campus model – meaning every single VU campus has co-located industry partners. This blurs the line between University campuses and workplaces, providing mutual benefits that have enduring outcomes for our students. Examples include Ambulance Victoria at our Sunshine Campus (aligning with our Centre of Excellence in Paramedicine); Autism Spectrum Australia and Lifeline at our St Albans Campus; Orygen (headspace) at Werribee; and the Industry Capability Network (ICN) and Sharpe and Abel law firm at our City Tower campus. Our new partnership with Mercy Health has created an opportunity to extend our mental health precinct in the outer west of Melbourne. The key for 2025 and beyond is to further extend our current collaborations and extend ourselves into new industries.

Focus on the future workforce: VU is placing a focus on student employment outcomes and ensuring students are prepared for graduation from the day they commence their course. Through a technology-driven approach, students will build their careers while studying, developing the skills that employers want. As a university that already has close connections with industry, we will further develop and grow our industry engagement approach, ensuring that we are providing students with the right skills and tools needed to land jobs, leading to greater student employment outcomes.

SIGNED for and on behalf of
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
by

Jessica Mohr

Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary

Position
of the Department of Education

Signature

01/12/2025

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of
Victoria University
by

Professor Adam Shoemaker

Full name (please print)

Vice-Chancellor

Position

Signature

In the presence of:

Rachel Searl

Witness (please print)

Executive Officer

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

In the presence of:

Natalie Meagher

Witness (please print)

Director, Strategy and Planning

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature