



## 2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Victoria University

### Mission and Strategic Planning

Victoria University's [Strategic Plan 2022-2028: Start well, finish brilliantly](#) outlines how we will achieve our ambitious vision to become a global leader in dual sector learning and research by 2028.

VU employs two primary methods to gauge our progress in line with our strategy, both reported through to University Council:

1. The **University Operational Plan** serves as a dynamic annual framework that identifies strategic initiatives and the institution's response to evolving external landscapes. It directs and aligns collective efforts and resources towards the achievement of strategic milestones.
2. The **Strategic Scorecard** with key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets to 2028. These KPIs track our year-on-year success, providing an enterprise-wide view of our annual performance.

The Strategic Plan is also supported by a range of Enterprise and Focused Plans, which detail how we will achieve our high-level objectives at a two-three year stage gate.

Over the period of 2024-25, the University's actions will be profoundly shaped by the release of the final report of Universities Accord, migration reform and the urgent need to address the nation's skills gaps. As well as this, responding to a more competitive domestic student market.

The [2024 University Operational Plan](#) identifies four key strategic initiatives in this context, centred on establishing strong campus identities, elevating areas of enterprise-strength, and undertaking collaborative research at scale. The key is we will have industry (ethically and appropriately) at the core.

Key strategic initiatives, with a focus on skills and jobs, include:

- **Establish the Centre of Excellence in Paramedicine at the Sunshine Campus:** Align VE, HE and research capability with industry partner Ambulance Victoria (who are already co-located on campus). This Australian-first Centre will deliver a sector-leading student experience with the latest technology and advanced teaching methods (co-designed with industry) to address skill demand areas, critical community needs, and grow the future workforce.
- **Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC):** Build on the exceptional work done in 2023 with our innovative approach to ECEC (attracting diverse cohorts and a significant focus on accelerated upskilling for existing workers). VU is a leading provider of current and future generations of early childhood educators to meet workforce and community demand. The Footscray Nicholson campus, located in the Footscray Learning Precinct, is emerging as the ideal location for a proposed *Institute of Early Childhood Education and Care* which would bring together educators, researchers, industry partners, state government representatives, unions, and communities to align with sector and community needs.
- **Turbocharging engagement with secondary schools:** Bolstered by the success of the Wyndham Tech School and the establishment of the Brimbank Tech School on the Sunshine Campus, VU will look to address education system-wide issues, particularly for equity groups, through stronger and

productively radical approaches to engagement with the secondary school system and students from 15 years of age to drive participation through to tertiary education.

- **Building health as a major strength:** Leveraging the New Footscray Hospital adjacent to our Footscray Park Campus and scheduled to open in 2025, our unique in the sector health offer (through both education and research) would be bolstered with a Health Innovation Centre built on campus for a more tailored, concentrated and enriching student clinical experience – enhancing placements and industry engagement.

Underpinning all of this, our guiding force is the rich diversity and uniqueness within our student and staff community, steadfastly driving us to be a ‘thriving place to study and work’.

Key initiatives, with a focus on institutional advancement, include:

- **Developing a First Nations Action Plan:** VU has a strategic driver to Protect Country, and this Action Plan will be developed to see real impact, along with measurable targets. Focus areas will include cultural load and safety, participation growth and progression, and Indigenous-led learning, teaching and research excellence.
- **Student and Staff Safety:** Further building on a strong policy framework that reflects VU’s commitment to inclusivity and the prevention of inappropriate behaviours to support the wellbeing and safety of the entire VU community, VU is the only University to sign a five-year strategic partnership with *Our Watch* and adopt a whole-of-institution approach to end gender-based violence in all its forms.
- **Campus Futures:** The [Campus Master Plan](#) is a dynamic and evolving vision for our entire built environment, and VU is looking to have a point of differentiation for each campus. Additionally, we aim to better leverage our campus assets to build financial resilience and to improve student and staff experience, while continuing to foster equity, social justice and leadership in the West. This will be further bolstered with the development of a Digital Master Plan and Infrastructure Strategy.
- **Financial and Organisational Sustainability:** VU undertook the Towards One VU Program in 2023 to improve our operating model and financial position, in order to allow for acceleration of our strategy. After undergoing workforce reform, the University will now work to ensure there are enduring savings, modernised and efficient processes for staff and enhancements to our student administration systems and processes.

#### **ADDITIONAL LINKS**

[VU Research and Impact Plan 2023-2028](#)

[Net Zero Plan](#)

[Campus Master Plan](#)

[VU Brilliant Together: Cultural Inclusion & Racial Equality Plan 2023-2026](#)

[VU Gender Equity Plan](#)

[Cyber Security Enterprise Plan 2022-2025](#)

[Workplace Wellness Plan 2021-2024](#)

[Victoria University Annual Report 2022](#) (includes Speech and Academic Freedom Attestation Statement on p. 67)

[Freedom of Expression Policy](#)

[Respect and Responsibility](#)

[VU Safer Community](#)

[Student Charter Policy](#)

[Employee Wellbeing Policy](#)

[Foreign Interference Protocols](#)

## Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

VU prides itself on being one of the most diverse universities in the country; our students and staff represent more than 90 different cultures and speak more than 200 different languages. It is both a strategic and moral imperative for us to guarantee that our policies, systems, infrastructure, and technologies prioritise accessibility and equity for all our students.

**Targets:** Our target was to have an equity group participation rate in HE of at least 34% and a success rate of 91% by end of 2024. Pleasingly, we are already exceeding this, with a student equity participation rate of 35.5% (which far exceeds the national average of 17% and the national target of 20%) and 91.4% success rate. Additionally, 43.3% of our students are first generation, ranking us third highest in Australia.

Key initiatives in 2024-25 include:

- **VU Block Model® and First Year College® 2.0:** This is a proven model to enhance the success of under-represented student cohorts. An evaluation report that included a five-year data set shows that overwhelmingly, these models have closed the gap between non-equity and equity students, and improved academic grades across the board. A strategic review of the VU Block Model® will be undertaken in 2024 to inform the next stage of development (more detail in section below).
- **First Nations student success:** While there is work to be done to increase our First Nations student cohort, VU has the highest success rate nationally for Indigenous students out of any university at 86%. This success is shaped by the VU Block Model® and VU's Indigenous academic unit Moondani Balluk. The First Nations Action Plan will include targets and actions to build on this strength.
- **Welcoming Universities Project:** VU is a pilot organisation in this project, an initiative of Welcoming Australia, aimed at creating national standards for cultural inclusion for the university sector. VU is actively demonstrating leadership by taking practical steps towards improving policies and practices, and seeking accreditation as a 'Welcoming University'. VU will be one of the first universities benchmarked against the standards.
- **Scholarships:** We are committed to supporting vulnerable students who may experience personal or financial barriers to success, and growing our scholarships is a priority. VU currently awards student scholarships to VE and HE students including Asylum Seekers Scholarships, Access Scholarships, First Year Booster, Pathways, Western Chances Access Scholarships and Ignite Grants and Scholarships, associated with the VU Guaranteed early entry program. The crowd-funded Student Support Fund will also continue.
- **Student Accessibility Action Plan 2024-28:** The sixth iteration (superseding the Student Accessibility Action Plan 2021-23) will build on the good work already undertaken, and will involve accessibility, mental health, equity, opportunity and fair process as a whole of university responsibility. The guiding principle, which will continue from the previous plan, is that 'if you get it right for students with disability, you get it right for all'.

Should additional funding become available (ie the Higher Education Continuity Grant), we intend to support students in the following ways:

- An uplift in targeted equity grants and scholarships

- Conduct nuanced data analysis and research into our existing equity cohort to better understand specific learning needs
- An uplift in Accessibility Liaison Officers
- Develop an outreach program that uniquely targets under-represented student cohorts in neighbouring western suburbs to come to Victoria University.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS

[Anti-Racism Policy](#)

### Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

In 2023, the University underwent major organisational change and completed a structural alignment of VE and HE under a newly formed Tertiary Education Portfolio. This move has set the foundations for VU to accelerate our strategy – elevating enterprise areas of strength and leveraging our dual-sector status.

Key initiatives in 2024-25 include:

- **Admissions:** VU's [admissions process](#) is as accessible as possible, with alternative means of seeing a student's potential other than ATAR. VU also offers the [VU Guaranteed](#) program, which enables VCE students to secure a place ahead of exams. Our priority is to align our strong policies with improved user experience, ensuring our enrolment process is simpler and faster. This project will also involve enhancing conversion, timetabling and a review of placements.
- **Strategic Review of the VU Block Model®:** In its seventh year of delivery, the VU Block Model® has been highly successful in improving student grades, satisfaction and retention. Several graduating cohorts have undertaken their entire course in Block, and there is now an accumulation of student outcomes data, published research, internal knowledge and capability as well as national and international developments in Block delivery that make a strategic review of the VU Block Model® timely – particularly given the imminent release of the Australian Universities Accord report. The Review will ensure the effectiveness of the VU Block Model® in delivering positive student outcomes over the student lifecycle (access, attrition, retention, progression, completion, satisfaction, and employment), particularly for equity cohorts. The award-winning and innovative First Year College® will also be considered as part of this Review.
- **Student Retention Plan:** Student retention and engagement is an ongoing priority, and a new Student Retention Plan is being developed (superseding the Student Retention Strategy 2021-23). Encompassing any key outcomes from the VU Block review, the focus will also be on intervention strategies to ensure at-risk students are identified early for a positive student experience from the very first touch point. Currently, at-risk students are identified according to risk scores calculated on more than 20 behavioural, performance and demographic characteristics. It is also worth noting that due to the Block, we can identify at-risk students much earlier than our traditional semester colleagues. VU also offers pre-enrolment support hubs and Learning Hubs to provide the highest level of support.
- **Graduate Employment Plan:** The Graduate Employment Plan is currently under development (supersedes the Student Employability Strategy 2021-23) to ensure our graduate outcomes reflect the fact that our students have highly-ranked employability skills. The Plan will build on initiatives such as [VU Employ](#) (offers students career services, support and advice), a Career Ready Award, the Career Influencers Network and VU Recruit, an in-house agency to support all graduates to find meaningful work, with an understanding of social and cultural contexts.
- **Digital Learning Plan:** VU's Digital Learning Plan 2024-28 (complete but undergoing University Council approval) is a whole of university strategy which will deliver a student-first approach to learning and

teaching design and development, ensure high-quality learning resources, support multiple channels of delivery and develop our teachers and academics as leaders in digital learning experience. This will be rolled out in 2024, and will ensure VU creates a dynamic and engaging learning environment that transcends traditional barriers of time and place.

- **International:** The [VU Melbourne International Plan 2023-28](#) is our strategic roadmap for growth guided by the principles of diversification in student nationality, course enrolments and channels of acquisition. Within the new Tertiary Education portfolio, all international activity has been aligned under VU Global as an organisational unit to foster stronger alignment in operations (including student support) and a shared focus on growth. This will see the plan extended to our transnational international education business. VU International also launched a new merit-based scholarship for international students.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS

[Student Retention and Success Policy](#)

[Student Mental Health Plan 2022-24](#)

[Disability Employee Network \(DEN\)](#)

### Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Our bold and focused research direction is outlined in the [VU Research and Impact Plan, 2023-2028](#), which includes measurable targets to track our performance and demonstrate our tangible impact on the University and beyond. These measures include research income, contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), timely HDR Completions, world standard and above ratings for our Priority Fields of Research and the value of our research partnerships.

As a global solutions hub largely based in the west of Melbourne, our research addresses some of the most significant problems of our time.

Key initiatives in 2024-25 include:

- **Professional Development Framework:** Develop, embed and track impact of a Professional Development (PD) Framework to attract and retain high-performing researchers. Includes an ongoing program of PD opportunities focussed on building researchers' knowledge of industry, community, research translations, commercialisation, and the UN SDGs.
- **Attracting and retaining HDR students:** Through increased industry/community PhD scholarships, industry/community mentoring, and facilitating two-way movement between industry/community. Embed the doctoral internship program that leverages on partnerships with industry/community/local government.
- **Develop considered metrics to measure impact and engagement:** Develop a bespoke VU 'research with impact' metric to support engagement with a broader and more diverse partnership base, drive new research, and facilitate 'big picture' projects. We continue to engage significantly with industry partners and have developed programs for research training internships and industry PhD's.
- **Increase the scale of VU research activities:** Embed a data-driven method for defining areas of VU research strength and priority Fields of Research (FoR), and explore opportunities to align/develop partnerships with the identified areas of research strength.
- **Commercial development with industry partners:** Build and grow commercial applications across a number of industry sectors in Australia and overseas, enabled through VU's extensive knowledge base spanning our specialised research focus areas. VU continually develops new knowledge and innovative technologies with the potential for commercial development with industry partners.

## Strategies for Engaging with Industry

Partnering with Principle is one of the five strategic drivers identified in VU's Strategic Plan. We have industry (ethically and appropriately) at the core of everything we do; our research, teaching, community service, and at the core of our response to the Victorian, Federal and our local governments.

Key initiatives in 2024-25 include:

- **Flipped Campus Model:** Our Flipped Campus model means that by 2028, every VU campus will house at least one strong industry partner onsite – to elevate the student experience, extend research strengths and deliver mutual benefits. By end of 2023, the flipped campus model sees Ambulance Victoria at the Sunshine Campus; Lifeline, Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) and Melbourne City Mission at the St Albans Campus; PEXA, Industry Capability Network and Sharpe and Abel (law firm) operating out of the City Tower; and Orygen on track to open at the Werribee Campus in 2024. The key for 2024 and beyond is to grow these collaborations further, and use these tenant partners to establish strong campus identities. The Footscray Park campus will be the penultimate flipped campus once the new Footscray Hospital opens, bolstering our long partnership with Western Health.
- **Major Alliances:** Our priority is to have multidimensional endeavours that deliver long-term value and strategic alignment for both organisations. Our major alliances are with the Western Bulldogs (and co-location at Whitten Oval, home of the VU High-Performance Centre), Greater Western Water, Western United and Western Health. All of these alliances involve industry-led learning, internships, placements and employment opportunities for VU's diverse student cohort, as well as strengthen research collaborations and community services. Continued growth in major alliances is a priority – aligned to VU's education and research strengths such as health and health science, paramedicine, nursing, physiotherapy, psychology, education, and sport.
- **The Skills Agenda:** The nation is experiencing a significant skills gap and – as a dual sector university, VU is positioned strongly to respond to this. As detailed in the first section of this document, VU will be addressing areas of skills shortage and workforce demand across areas such as early childhood education and care, paramedicine and health (eg nursing, midwifery, and other allied health professionals). Looking ahead, this may also include manufacturing and construction. VU's planning in this space is to bring together education, industry partners and research capability to stimulate the co-design of new, innovative approaches to skills development – informed by sector-leading practices and technologies and aligned with sector and community needs.
- **Partnerships for good:** Connecting our enterprise and our activism with key partner organisations who are working to end racism and links strongly with VU's significant expertise in the social justice and anti-racism research space. The Our Watch partnership (the only of its kind) is an exemplar of this, with significant long-term investment which will have impact that extends far beyond campus boundaries.

SIGNED for and on behalf of  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

In the presence of:

by

Madonna Morton

---

Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary

---

Position

of the Department of Education



Signature

29/05/2024

---

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of

Victoria University

by

**Professor Adam Shoemaker**

---

Full name (please print)

**Vice-Chancellor**

---

Position



Signature

**Natalie Meagher**

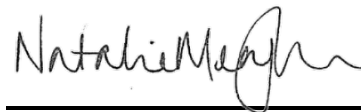
---

Witness (please print)

**Director, Strategy and Planning**

---

Position or profession of witness (please print)



Signature