



Australian
National
University

Renew ANU 2025 Change Principles: Consultation Paper

March 2025

The Australian National University

Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

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TEQSA Provider ID: PRV12002 (Australian University)

CRICOS Provider Code: 00120C

PART 1. Introduction and context

The Australian National University ('ANU' or 'the University') is Australia's national university and has a unique history among Australian universities. Our story dates back almost 80 years as a university and more than 20,000 years as a meeting place to share knowledge by our First Nation custodians. We were established by an Act of the Federal Parliament, to provide Australia with a national centre of research, learning and teaching that would help shape and hold conversations that have built the world around us. As set out in our current Act, the ANU was founded to advance and transmit knowledge, "by undertaking research and teaching of the highest quality".

The enduring mission of the University remains. From the global financial crisis, to pandemics, war and civil unrest, government intervention, along with discoveries of emergent fields and ways of thinking, it has never been more critical to invest in research and education for Australia. It is both a responsibility and privilege to undertake this work on behalf of the University community, the nation and neighbouring region.

Renew ANU 2025

This document outlines the University's overall approach to university-wide improvements and sets the foundation for future discussions. It precedes the likely development of proposals for changes to the University's organisational units and functions.

This document has been prepared to support consultation with staff and their unions, in line with Clauses 69 and 70 of The Australian National University Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026 (the Enterprise Agreement).

In 2025, the University will continue to focus on refining its structure and organisation, building on the realignment activities completed in 2024. This will include implementing an evolving revised operating model (see Part 3 for further details; also, **Appendix A**).

The operating model serves as a high-level framework. "Operating model" refers to the combination of people, roles and responsibilities, organisational structures, processes, technology and data that together deliver value to the organisation. A revised operating model will facilitate achievement of the following objectives:

Better support our strategic goals across research and education;

Align with our mission; and

Contribute to the targeted financial savings outlined in consultation with staff in 2024.

As part of this consultative process, the University is providing staff an opportunity to provide input on guiding principles, considerations for efficiencies, and suggestions for reducing duplication while ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

Any future decisions that may significantly impact staff will be made through separate change proposals and consultation, in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

PART 2. Rationale to proposed changes

Renew ANU

In 2024, the University launched the Renew ANU initiative as a means of consulting with staff on ways for improving efficiency and financial sustainability of the University.

Staff feedback has been central to the University's decision-making process. As of 16 February 2025, the Renew ANU website has been visited almost 150,000 times. 12 townhall meetings for staff in 2024 were attended live by more than 8,000 people, with recordings viewed by a further 5,000 people. Almost 400 staff questions were answered in real time at those town halls. The change documents have been opened almost 18,000 times.

Comments received during townhalls, via emails, and through the website have been used to add 94 FAQs to the Renew ANU website and refine the University's approach, ensuring that issues such as job security, redeployment support, and operational changes are addressed as change proposals were considered. A townhall focused on University Finances was delivered by the Chief Financial Officer, and more are planned for 2025.

The University's financial position

The Renew ANU initiative was established with a target of reducing the University's recurring cost base by \$250 million, which includes provisional targets of \$100 million in staff costs and \$150 million in non-staff costs. Implementation plans from 2024 have realised a \$13 million contribution to the overall salary savings target. The University's financial position and the status of measures implemented by the University, to date, to address these challenges is set out in **Appendix A, Part A and Part B**.

We remain a significant distance away from the required financial savings. The financial outlook for 2025 and beyond remains challenging, and there is an urgent need to make the necessary savings to achieve long-term sustainability. Continued uncertainty including overseas student enrolments and related visa issues has potential to further exacerbate the financial challenges.

The University has and will continue to engage with our community about these financial challenges and our progress towards financial sustainability.

The University's performance

Over the past several years, ANU has consistently ranked the lowest in the national benchmark for overall satisfaction and efficiency across all services, including HR, IT, student support, research support, and more. These results point to a widespread issue with the effectiveness of current service delivery models across the University. See **Appendix A, Part C** for further details.

Notably, the University's services are found to be among the most inefficient and costly in the Australian higher education sector. This is especially concerning in comparison to peer Group of Eight (Go8) universities, where similar services are performing at a higher level of satisfaction and more effectively in terms of cost. This is confirmed by UniForum benchmarking results demonstrating that the University underperforms relative to peer institutions, particularly in terms of cost efficiency and user satisfaction. The underperformance is seen across multiple service areas where inefficiencies are causing higher-than-expected costs and lower-than-expected satisfaction. A summary of analysis of benchmarking data (which underpins the University's proposed change) is set out in **Appendix A, Part C**.

The decline in the University's international academic ranking performance is evidenced in two of the most noteworthy international rankings schemes, the QS World University Rankings and the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings. In the latest THE rankings, ANU was ranked 73rd in the world, down from 67th in 2023, and continues a downward trend since our high point at number 47 as a THE top 50 university in 2017. Our QS rankings have also fallen from 19th to 30th in the world between 2016 and 2025. This continued decline in performance has consequences for ANU including for student recruitment, talent attraction and retention, and overall global competitiveness.

The University's operating model

The University needs an overhaul of its operating model and its services to achieve the financial sustainability and operational excellence that the community expects (See **Appendix A, Part C and Part D**).

Benchmarking data demonstrates that ANU lags the sector in terms of quality and efficiency of service delivery. Many decentralised services at ANU are among the most costly in the sector while delivering only average satisfaction. Staff feedback has consistently demonstrated the lack of satisfaction with the quality and delivery of services across the University. A thorough analysis conducted in 2020, based on extensive community consultation, revealed the need for substantially improved service performance and the need for a better operational model to guide future service delivery.¹

During 2024 there was a focus on consolidating reporting lines and ensuring central coordination of some functions (See **Appendix A, Part B and Part C**). The University's operating model needs to transform from a diverse, disaggregated and decentralised operational model to a cohesive, strategic and centralised model that delivers high quality services in a financially sustainable way.

The University is committed to achieving academic and research excellence in a financially sustainable manner by ensuring that Academic Colleges are focused on teaching and research with a College-specific professional workforce; and central portfolios that deliver high quality, efficient and effective services that operate at the University-wide level (See **Appendix A, Part C and Part D**).

PART 3. Nature of the Proposed Change

In 2025, the University will continue to focus on refining its structure and organisation, building on the realignment activities completed in 2024. It is critical that the approach to University-wide improvement is comprehensive and includes consideration of each service, academic and research activity and determine how best to deliver the University's long term financial sustainability (See **Appendix A, Part C and Part D**).

The University's proposed approach will:

- **Remove duplication in service delivery:** To identify and eliminate duplication across services by streamlining functions where overlap exists and creating greater role clarity and accountability, to ensure that services are better aligned with the University's core mission.
- **Identify non-salary cost savings:** Continuing the Expenditure Taskforce to ensure resources are allocated efficiently, improving cost-effectiveness while maintaining the high-quality services required to support teaching and research.
- **Develop specific proposals for change:** The University will adopt a phased approach to developing specific change proposals to support the improved operating model and College activities. These individual proposals will be developed and led at the local level and in close consultation with relevant stakeholders.

It is equally important that this approach is framed by key principles which guide the University's organisational units and functions. Principles are essential for alignment of workforce capabilities, business processes and technology. The proposed principles for academic and research activities include:

- **National Mission and Academic Excellence:** Academic structures and pursuits are continuously reviewed to align with the University's national mission, research goals,

and global rankings. This ensures ANU maximises its capabilities and strengths while maintaining a strong reputation for excellence.

- **Strategic Alignment and Financial Sustainability:** The academic strategy and operating model must support research priorities, teaching excellence, and financial viability. Resources, funding, and workforce planning will be data-driven to align with student demand, research funding, and strategic priorities.
- **Regular Program and Delivery Review:** Academic programs and delivery methods will be assessed to ensure they remain relevant, innovative, and aligned with student needs, industry expectations, and global best practices. Digital and technological integration will enhance learning and research outcomes.

The proposed principles to underpin a new ANU operating model include:

- **Mission-focused transition:** Changes to operating models should minimise disruption on educational programs and research and align with our national mission, institutional commitments, values and purpose.
- **Role Clarity:** academic leaders will focus on teaching, research, and policy development, while professional leaders will manage and oversee services. This separation ensures that academic staff focus on core academic activities, with administrative and operational support provided by professional staff.
- **Consistency across functions:** Standardised leadership roles, consistent support models and equitable and effective service delivery across the University to promote clear expectations, support and governance. This ensures fair and consistent experiences for all staff and students.
- **Collaboration and shared governance:** Academic and professional leadership roles and the professional workforce within colleges and schools will be aligned at the college level, creating centres of excellence that foster collaboration and shared decision-making.
- **University wide services will have a central functional owner:** Each service will have a functional owner accountable for an end-to-end, ANU-wide service model, and all aspects of service delivery and service performance.
- **Data-driven resource allocation:** The workforce composition will be tied to key drivers such as the number of students, research funding, teaching loads and strategic priorities, ensuring that resources are fairly aligned.
- **Operational efficiency and effectiveness:** People, processes, technology, information and decision-making will be aligned to be efficient, effective and sustainable.
- **Clear workforce development pathways:** There will be clear career development pathways for professional staff.

PART 4. Impact of Change

It is anticipated that the proposed future operating model will impact the whole of ANU. This may bring changes to the University's structure, frameworks, and staffing portfolio. Consequently, it is likely that certain functions, academic and research activities and services will either no longer be needed or will be rationalised or reduced. As a result, current staffing levels may exceed future requirements in some areas.

Staff reductions

It is anticipated there will be staff reductions. The actual number (and locations) of positions that may be impacted is not yet known. The impact and exact numbers will depend on the outcomes of the ongoing Voluntary Separation Scheme, feedback from stakeholders, decisions made regarding the best approach for the future operating model and development of future proposals for change.

It's important to note that the impact on individual staff members cannot be precisely determined at this point as salary savings can be achieved through a variety of approaches. Where staff reductions are required in a particular part of the University, a change proposal will be prepared outlining the specific roles affected and this will be put to staff for consultation in line with the Enterprise Agreement.

Realignment and Redistribution of Tasks

University services and functions are likely to be streamlined, and tasks may be redistributed or reduced to ensure that the workforce is aligned with the University's strategic goals and operating requirements. While these changes are anticipated, reviews need to be undertaken to assess the extent of these adjustments and that any redistribution of tasks is consistent with the provisions outlined in the Enterprise Agreement, ensuring that workloads are fairly managed and in accordance with the University's legal obligations.

Any specific redistribution of tasks would be proposed as part of any potential change plans for individual areas. Such change plans would outline specific staffing adjustments, role reallocations, and any necessary reskilling required to ensure alignment with the future operating model.

Staff will be given the opportunity to provide feedback on proposed changes before any final decisions are made. These decisions will be addressed in more detail in any potential forthcoming individual change plans, expected to be finalised throughout 2025, with some plan implementations potentially extending into 2026.

Job security

The University is committed to providing job security and, where possible, any required staff reductions will be managed and achieved through:

- natural attrition;
- permanent transfer;
- redeployment;
- voluntary conversion to part-time work;
- fixed term and pre-retirement agreements; or
- voluntary separation.

While the University will make every effort to avoid redundancies, where they are unavoidable, they will be managed in accordance with the redundancy provisions of the Enterprise Agreement, or individual performance-based employment contracts.

The University has and continues to take steps to minimise impacts on staff, including but not limited to the offering of the voluntary separation scheme (VSS) and adopted measures directed at reductions in non-salary cost savings.

Impact on Casualisation

While the overall transformation may lead to adjustments in staffing levels, the specific effects on casualisation are not yet fully ascertainable. The redistribution of work and potential

reduction in some functions may impact casual staff and the full scope of these changes will be clarified once detailed change plans are developed.

The University will continue to monitor the impact on casualisation as the process unfolds. Staff, including casual workers, will be kept informed of any updates or changes that may arise from the consultation and subsequent implementation plans.

Psychosocial Risk Assessments

The University is committed to supporting staff through periods of change by proactively identifying and addressing potential impacts.

The University will continue to conduct psychosocial risk assessments to identify and mitigate potential stressors associated with organisational change. These assessments will help shape support measures to protect the wellbeing of staff throughout the transition and inform supports provided for staff.

In response to identified potential risks, the following table outlines control measures that guide the provision of support for staff that may be impacted by change, and continue to be assessed and refined:

Potential psychosocial risk area/s	Mitigations
Poor organisational change management	<p>Apply the change provisions of the ANU Enterprise Agreement, including genuine consultation with staff and stakeholders.</p> <p>Ensure HR practitioners are available and equipped to support the change process in line with the EA and to respond to queries and concerns.</p> <p>Make available meetings with local leaders of the change to impacted staff, including the opportunity to bring a support person/union representative.</p> <p>Provide a townhall meeting to affected staff about the change including the opportunity to ask questions.</p> <p>Ensure staff receive clear communications about the change in a timely manner, including timeframes, comprehensive support to affected staff including EAP, Staff Advisors and Career Transition support.</p>
Lack of staff support	<p>Make available meetings for affected staff to explain impact, timeframes for change and support available.</p> <p>Ensure on-site and off-site support is made available to affected staff including EAP support.</p> <p>Ensure HR practitioners and Organisational Change are equipped to support staff enquiries and provide accurate information on entitlements.</p>

	Dedicated line of communication for Leaders to seek advice from P&C on issues potentially affecting their staff.
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PART 5. Process to Support Change

The University will adopt a phased and structured approach in considering any potential future changes. Key elements of the process to support change are laid out below:

Consultation on Renew ANU 2025 Change Principles

ANU staff can provide feedback on this paper until 19 March 2025 via [eForm here](#). The University will consider all feedback prior to the release of any potential individual change proposals.

Development of Specific Proposals for Change

Once the proposed approach and change principles presented in this document have been consulted on, reviewed and finalised, they will guide organisational units and functions on the following matters:

where duplication exists within services, particularly where overlap in functions may create inefficiencies, areas will be streamlined, with functions either being consolidated or rationalised to create a more optimal and efficient model. Changes in service delivery will be aimed at better aligning with the University's core mission of supporting teaching and research while achieving cost savings; and

where changes need to be made to achieve savings and meet the University's goal for financial sustainability, organisational and function leads will work with their respective areas to identify the nature of the changes which may be required.

If the analysis undertaken results in proposals for significant change, ANU will provide specific information on any proposed changes and consult with any affected staff and the community in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement.

Organisational units and functions may consider preliminary design planning and consider engaging in early discussion on proposed changes, while others may take longer. There may be some areas that have small levels of change (that are not "major workplace change" under the ANU Agreement) that can be managed through informal means, with consultation and discussion at that local area level.

In considering any design or proposed changes which may be required, consultation will be undertaken that is mindful of the impact on students, HDR supervision and panel arrangements, impact on collaborations across disciplines, impact on research grants, research and other contracts and partners, as well as any impact on donors and alumni.

It is anticipated a program of proposals for formal organisational change will commence from Quarter 2, 2025 after the proposed approach and change principles are finalised and will continue until implementation is completed.

PART 6. Consultation

The University recognises that this period of consultation and change will bring uncertainty. Throughout this process, we are committed to engagement with staff, ensuring transparency

and consultation at every stage. Any further proposed changes required to deliver Renew ANU will be undertaken with care, and agreed changes will be implemented in a structured manner.

During this transition, appropriate support will be available to all staff. The ANU community is encouraged to approach this period with compassion and kindness, fostering a respectful and supportive environment.

The University will also engage in consultation with the NTEU and other unions, ensuring their input is considered throughout the process.

Opportunity to comment on the proposed change plan

This document is being circulated to:

- All University Staff;
- All University Students;
- Nominated staff representatives including the NTEU;
- ANUSA; and
- Other relevant stakeholders as required.

All recipients are invited to provide feedback on the University's intended approach, including input on the proposed guiding principles, considerations for efficiencies, and suggestions for reducing duplication while ensuring long-term financial sustainability. Any other suggestions to support the University and its staff are welcomed.

Feedback can be provided via [eForm here](#). Feedback will close on Wednesday, 19 March 2025.

Timeline for consultation

The indicative timeline for consultation is provided below.

6 March 2025	Release of Renew ANU Consultation Plan 2025 Commencement of Consultation Period until 19 March 2025 College and Portfolio Briefings
12 March – 18 March 2025	Townhalls with COO & Provost Student Forums
19 March 2025	Close of Consultation Period
20 March - 28 March 2025	Review and consider feedback Finalisation of the implementation plan
31 March 2025	Publication of Feedback from Consultation
2 April 2025	Proposed release of Implementation Plan

Representation

Throughout this process staff members may be represented and seek advice or assistance at any time from a person of their choice, as outlined in the ANU Staff Representation Procedure which may be accessed via this [link](#).

Staff may not request representation by a legal practitioner unless they are directly involved in a formal disciplinary or termination of employment processes.

PART 7. Where can I seek support?

Staff seeking support or advice can reach out to our Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) – Assure who can be contacted by calling 1800 808 374. Information about the available support and other information can be found by visiting the University’s [Employee Assistance Program webpage](#).

For additional support from outside of the University, please contact relationships Australia on (02) 6122 7100.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Supporting Information

- Part A: Financial Context for Renew ANU 2025
- Part B: Status of Measures Implemented to Date
- Part C: University Performance: Benchmarking
- Part D: University Operating Models

Appendix B: 2020 Report of the Resources and Service Provision Taskforce