

Strategic Directions

University Strategy Codesign | March 2026



Australian
National
University

The Australian National University acknowledges the Ngunnawal and Ngambri-Kamberri people, who are the Traditional Owners of the land upon which the University's Acton campus is located.

This Ngunnawal and Ngambri-Kamberri land supports students and staff throughout their time at ANU. It will continue to hold a space for future generations to come together and learn from Country and one another.

We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Indigenous peoples, past, present and future, and acknowledge that this land from which we benefit has an ancient history that is both rich and sacred.

The ANU community makes a commitment to always respect the land upon which we stand and to ensure that the voices of this land's Indigenous peoples are both heard and listened to so that we may move towards a future marked by cooperation and mutual respect.



Invitation

There are many things about ANU that make it a uniquely positive, inspiring and high-impact place to work and study. We are proud of the rich foundations on which we build, and we are excited for the next phase in our development.

As a key part of our commitment to codesigning the University Strategy with the ANU community, we share this strategic directions document with you. Here, we explain the process, timeline, and some key emerging themes.

In this discovery phase of strategy development, we invite you to continue contributing your expertise, insights and perspectives to inform how the University progresses over the next five years, and beyond.

This is a work in progress. We will continue to iterate the Strategy by sharing drafts with the community as we seek to articulate a future of which we can all be proud.

We are grateful for your input and your dialogue, and we are excited to build the future of our University together.

Professor Rebekah Brown FASSA, Interim Vice-Chancellor & President, and the University Executive



You can find the most recent Strategy, 'ANU by 2025' at:
anu.edu.au/about/strategic-planning/anu-strategic-plan-2021-2025

Why does the University need a Strategy?

The Strategy serves multiple purposes

The University has published strategies, or strategic plans, for over thirty years. These documents serve several functions: at one level, they articulate to the University community – and beyond, to our alumni, partners and stakeholders – how the institution conceives of itself at the given moment, and what its aspirations are over the coming few years.

Practically, **whole-University strategies are used to guide work across the institution by providing the direction and guiderails through which we work.** As well as the core functions of research and education, strategies speak to our capacity for investment in the people, systems, campus environment and processes needed for a successful university. They can also articulate what we plan to stop doing.

Typically, university strategies also articulate specific ambitions and align performance measures to our goals. These form a key part of the governance and accountability mechanisms for the University.

Our context is changing

While the Australian National University Act (1991) provides core principles for our operation, it does so in broad terms. In addition to our founding mission and Act, **we will benefit from Strategy which looks ahead to take account of many factors,** including:

- The evolving needs of the nation which we serve through our research and education;
- Changing patterns of demand for education from both Australian and overseas students;
- Social change, including threats to concepts of truth and the importance of freedom for academic inquiry;
- Technological developments, including Artificial Intelligence;
- Climate change and geopolitical shocks.



The Strategy provides the guide for the University's plans and actions

The inputs to the Strategy include:

- Our **community codesign** process inviting contributions from everyone with an interest in the University's future, including staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders;
- The **Roadmap**, including the rapid stocktakes and transparent plans;
- **Existing strategies and plans**, including the [ANU Corporate Plan 2025-2028](#), Research Strategy, and Learning and Teaching Strategy;
- Our **values**, and the [Living Document](#) which followed the Nixon Review.
- Financial modelling and performance **data**.



ANU
by
2030
working title

The outputs from the Strategy include:

- **Feedback to the community** from the codesign process;
- Information to **inform our community about the ambitions, values and direction of the University**, and how they can continue to engage actively in the evolution of the institution;
- A **comprehensive planning framework** which aligns internal strategies and plans, provides performance measures, identifies governance mechanisms and accountabilities, and shows how we will monitor implementation.

What does it mean to codesign the University Strategy?



There are limitations to all codesign processes: not every idea or suggestion will become part of the final Strategy. Decisions are required to assess priorities, and to resolve conflicts between competing proposals. Further information will be provided about decisions as the Strategy development progresses. If you want further information – at any time – email: strategy.codesign@anu.edu.au



The timeline for the new Strategy

DISCOVERY

December 2025 – March 2026

University Leadership Group (ULG) consultations in Colleges and Portfolios. The group met on 10 March to present key findings.

The **University Leadership Group (ULG)** meets (31 March to 1 April) to explore strategic directions.

This **directions document** is released to invite further input, building on the ULG insights and outlining the Strategy process.

Expressions of interest sought for **facilitated sessions**.

DESIGN

April - May

Strategy v1 available for feedback. Target date in April, TBC.

Facilitator materials and training to support effective dialogue and exploration of Strategy v1. Facilitated sessions run during April – May.

Community survey open for feedback April – May (exact dates TBC).

Alumni feedback sessions.

External stakeholder engagement (e.g. parliamentarians, public service, industry).

Strategy v2 building on feedback on v1, and including feedback on codesign process. Target date May, TBC.

External stakeholder engagement continues.

Internal formal approval process for the Strategy.

DELIVERY

May onwards

Launch final Strategy early August.

Develop and publish **comprehensive planning framework**.

Key codesign opportunities.



Where are we on the timeline?

DISCOVERY

The **University Leadership Group (ULG)** convened small group consultations focusing on three core questions:

- What are we genuinely good at?
- What are our biggest opportunities?
- What do we need to accomplish over the next 3-5 years?

ULG met on 10 March. The outcomes from this meeting informed this Strategic Directions document

The **ULG consultations** produced 32 reports built on:

- staff engaged across Colleges and Portfolios
- Workshops, surveys, focus groups, interviews and digital collaboration
- Synthesis by Deans and Portfolio leads supported by their leadership teams

This **Strategic Directions document**:

- highlights key themes raised across these reports (see following pages);
- explains the Strategy codesign process and highlights when, and how, the community can engage with the process;
- invites further expressions of interest for facilitated sessions in April/May;
- asks prompting questions to support further engagement with the Strategy development.



What we have heard so far



We should celebrate the unique features of the University

Elements to nurture and promote raised in the codesign, so far:

Our unique National University identity: ANU serves the nation, helps navigate complex challenges, and convenes nationally-important conversations

Our commitment to research excellence: we seek to be exceptional in all our research, and our trans-disciplinarity is a core strength

Our high quality education: we shape the future through the next generation of leaders inspired by research-led education, opportunities for trans-disciplinarity, and First Nations perspectives

Our human scale with global impact: our University campus experience is an asset for our diverse students and staff, and we provide a distinctively personalised education

Our engagement with policymakers: ANU provides expert input to policy design and development, and counsels governments on today's and tomorrow's challenges

Our goal of institutional coherence: we have the opportunity to present one university view that integrates education and student experience, research, and our broader social impact



We should work to build our capabilities and resilience

Priority areas for improvement raised in the codesign, so far:

Invest in **people and culture** including clear career pathways, professional development and wellbeing support

Ensure that **systems and infrastructure** are fit-for-purpose – through user-centred design – to reduce friction, free up time and improve morale

More clearly articulate ANU's **distinctive identity** and value proposition to build reputation and attract talented staff and students

Protect, and further invest in, **research infrastructure** including emerging capabilities as a foundation for research quality

Enable better **cross-institution working** to promote innovation – in education and student experience, and research – while preserving autonomy

Reform the internal **budget model** to incentivise positive behaviours, enable essential investment, and fund strategic priorities



Help shape our future, together



Guiding questions

These questions are not exhaustive. As a codesign process, we offer these as stimulus for dialogue. In the spirit of dialogue, please feel free to ask the questions that you feel are most necessary for exploring the future of the University.

How can we best capture and articulate the distinctive, and complex, contribution that ANU makes to the nation?

How does our national mission cohere with our local impact and international reach?

How do we attract and support the talent that we need – in students and staff – to maximise the impact that we have through our research and education?

What do we need – in the ways we work, where we focus, or what we do – to be resilient to change from external forces like AI, demographic shifts and climate change?

What should we fix for our University to work better?

What should we stop doing?

What is the priority order?

What's missing? What better questions could we ask to identify new ideas for the future of the University?

To find out more about the Strategy development process, or to volunteer to host a facilitated conversation, visit the webpage: anu.edu.au/about/anu-university-strategy-community-engagement



Thank you

Contact us

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TEQSA PROVIDER ID: PRV12002 (AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY)
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