

Draft Strategy v1.0

University Strategy Codesign | April 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

This Draft Strategy follows the Strategic Directions document from March 2026 and invites your further input. The document is the product of significant work and engagement from across the University.

The Strategic Directions document explained the process of codesign and how sharing materials is central to that approach. This draft is shared in that spirit. This document reiterates some guiding questions as prompts for ways to interrogate the draft Strategy.

The draft tries to capture many of the distinctive features of the University including: our human scale; our partnership with government; and that we are research-led.

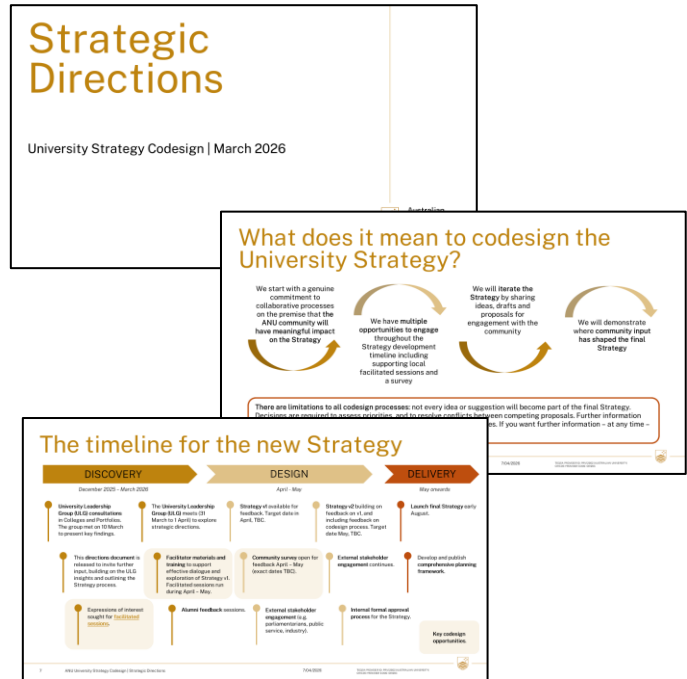
Please share what resonates, and what doesn't, where there are the right ambitions and where there is more work to do. We also want to know what's missing.

There are two key ways for you to contribute to the development of the University's Strategy:

1. Complete the staff and student survey, open 21st April to 13th May;
2. Attend a discussion session led by a volunteer facilitator from among our staff and students, from 28th April to 13th May.

The outputs from these activities will inform the next stages of the Strategy. Thank you for all your contributions.

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



Access the Strategic Directions document and details about codesign opportunities here anu.edu.au/about/anu-university-strategy-community-engagement



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, national, regional 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, the staff and student survey, or find out more about attending a facilitated session, please see: anu.edu.au/about/anu-university-strategy-community-engagement



Draft Strategy



Draft Strategy structure



Identity

- We first articulate the **purpose** of our institution through both a re-statement of our role as the national university and our commitments to **First Nations**.
- We share the **values** that we commit to nurture in the University. These are drawn from the Living Document which was informed by community codesign.
- We focus on our **people** as central to the Strategy, and how success for ANU relies on our ability to support all staff, students, alumni, partners and other stakeholders.

Impact

- **Research** and **education** are the two primary means of our impact in the world. Cross-cutting these are our **spheres of influence** – local, national, Asia-Pacific region, and international – and how we cultivate collaborations for mutual benefit.
- The **enablers** are essential for ensuring that we have the financial, physical, digital and human resources to achieve our ambitions.



Identity



Our purpose as the National University

Context

- The University was established in 1946 and is governed by [the ANU Act of 1991](#). ANU is unique among Australian universities having been established by the Commonwealth Government and with distinct statutory obligations.
- As the only national university, we have a distinct and essential role to recognise, celebrate and promote First Nations people and knowledges.
- We receive the National Institutes Grant as the stewards of public investment in research, infrastructure and sovereign capabilities.
- The Act requires the University to play national and international roles, and to be an institution for the ACT and locality. The University's functions are further elaborated in the Funding Agreement with the Department of Education (see excerpt, right).
- Our work is informed by national reference points including [Australia's National Science and Research Priorities](#) and the [Universities Accord](#), and our engagement with the Australian Public Service. As our world changes, and the needs of the nation evolve, we must also adapt and ensure that we serve Australia.

The purpose for which the National Institutes Grant is provided to the ANU is to recognise the role the University plays as a national institute in facilitating key activities that are of national significance, including:

- maintaining and enhancing distinctive concentrations of excellence in research and education, particularly in areas of national importance to Australia;
- supporting the development of Australia's national unity and identity, including by improving Australia's understanding of itself and the history and culture of its Indigenous peoples, its Asia-Pacific neighbours, and its place in the international community;
- maintaining and further developing the University's strong focus on research and the University's educational philosophy that its students are part of a community of scholars;
- enhancing Australia's prosperity through supporting sustainable economic development, innovation and creativity, and research and education (particularly research and education in areas of national importance to Australia);
- providing a national, regional, and international public policy resource to address major issues confronting governments, business and communities;
- aspiring to the highest international standards of scholarship; and
- maintaining and further developing long-term strategic relationships with government, business, other universities and institutions and the public, both within Australia and internationally.



Our purpose as the Australian National University

Direction

- ANU will be celebrated as a globally-connected research-led university which serves the nation through our teaching and research. We attract diverse and accomplished academics and students, and we create the conditions for our people to do their best work.
 - We will demonstrate our service to the nation. Our research and education build sovereign capabilities. We work directly with politicians and public servants to provide access to timely, rigorous and impartial evidence.
 - We will be known as the trusted steward and advisor for the public investment in research capabilities for the public good and be the natural partner of choice for governments.
 - We will focus our effort and investment on the areas of greatest impact in alignment with our purpose while progressively reshaping or reducing activity in areas that are lower priority or no longer sustainable.
 - We will make the most of our campus assets as places of belonging, community, engagement and impact.
- Our Strategy commits that we will be, by 2030:
 - A leader for First Nations empowerment through self-determination;
 - A values-led institution which provides our community with the conditions and opportunities to thrive;
 - A growing university where our people are focused on addressing the challenges that matter, and with the support and resources to create the highest quality research and impact;
 - A place where diverse students thrive through high quality, relevant and purposeful research-led education supported by a holistic student experience;
 - A university which is a partner of choice, domestically and internationally, where we leverage our relationships to drive mutual benefits; and
 - A well-run university with clear governance, leadership and management accountabilities underpinned by the financial sustainability, digital capabilities, physical resources, policies, systems and processes required for our ongoing success.



Our First Nations commitments

Context

- The University has a distinct and essential role for First Nations peoples. Our location positions us as a natural convener of national Indigenous policy dialogue.
- We have a proven record through the Tjabal Centre which achieves nation-leading completion rates for Indigenous students, and through the First Nations Portfolio's recognised leadership in policy, economic empowerment, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty.
- The context is urgent, and shifting rapidly: the post-Voice environment, the growing salience of UNDRIP internationally, and the intersection of AI with Indigenous knowledge systems all demand institutionally-embedded commitments.

Direction

- ANU will celebrate our explicit commitment to First Nations peoples, Indigenous knowledge and leadership as a core institutional strength underpinned by the principle of self-determination.
- We will provide leadership in Australia, and for Indigenous peoples of the Asia-Pacific.
- We will build on our existing commitments to UNDRIP by embedding its principles across our institutional practices.
- We will be the university of choice for Indigenous students and staff, and a global leader in First Nations education and research.
- We will be recognised as the national leader for cultivating the next generation of Indigenous leaders for academia, public life, and international forums.

Possible actions

- Embed UNDRIP as a guiding institutional framework and implement its principles across research practices, data governance, and community engagement.
- Strengthen Indigenous representative leadership and commitment through the Tjabal Centre for Indigenous student success and through the First Nations Portfolio for research and policy impact.
- Develop and implement pathways for Indigenous HDR students, ECRs, and emerging leaders into academic careers and external policy and leadership roles.
- Grow ANU's global profile in Indigenous-led research through international partnerships and training programs.



Our values

The Nixon Implementation Working Groups, Community Reference Panel and Steering Groups identified the following values as essential to our experiences in the University:

- **Accountability:** We follow through on our commitments and take responsibility for our decisions. This includes transparent reporting, owning setbacks, and ensuring meaningful consequences when expectations are not met.
- **Respect:** Respect shapes every interaction within our community. It is central to eliminating harassment, bullying, racism, sexism, and discrimination.
- **Integrity:** Integrity means acting honestly, making fair decisions, and using power responsibly.
- **Excellence for Purpose:** We pursue excellence through openness, humility, and intellectual generosity, to create knowledge and serve our national mission – not to create exclusivity or hierarchy for its own sake.
- **Inclusion:** Inclusion is about designing environments where people can participate, feel safe, and be heard. Representation alone is not enough.
- **Care:** Care recognises the humanity in one another. It includes attention to wellbeing, workload, and the human impact of our decisions.

The behaviours associated with these values are further elaborated in the [Living Document](#) (login required). These are the values that should be nurtured in the University through the next Strategy period.



Our people

Context

- The University's quality, culture and impact are driven by our people – staff and students – who choose to be members of the community.
- We have not always provided our community with a safe, respectful, stable or sustainable work or study environment. We must do better.
- When our community is high trust, and our values are lived out in practices, our colleagues can do their best work. Our collaborative capacity and relational capital are drivers of our success, and we must actively nurture these.
- This Strategy should be human-centric with a focus on supporting the cultures, norms, and behaviours for both individual and collective success.

Direction

- ANU will live out its values and be a place of pride and belonging.
- We will be a resilient institution with trust, leadership accountability and the capacity to deliver our Strategy through robust management and governance structures.
- We will have a compelling and distinctive student proposition based on our scale and high-quality research-led education.
- We will grow the size of our community of staff and students judiciously to ensure that we can be sustainable, and not to lose the human-scale experience that we enjoy.
- Through our actions, behaviours and commitments, we will build trust with external stakeholders and our alumni, supporters and donors.

Possible actions

- Promote our values across the University, and embed them in our leadership, management and governance practices.
- Invest in our people including leadership development and succession planning, and communities of practice.
- Improve our internal and external communications for consistency and transparency.
- Demonstrate trust in our internal capabilities through insourcing expertise before outsourcing.
- Implement an integrated People Strategy.
- Ensure that workloads are transparent, reasonable and sustainable.
- Improve systems and processes to enable effective work.



Context | Examples of our impact through research and education

National Infrastructure for Scientific Advancement and Capability. As the national university, we hold responsibility for developing and supporting globally leading infrastructure and instrumentation to address understanding of the natural physical world, and to serve higher education and other entities across Australia. We focus on identifying areas of national need and emerging technologies and accounting for infrastructure across STEM and HASS. This underpins the National Reconstruction Fund, advanced manufacturing, quantum, and emerging technology strategies.

Self-determination and Sovereignty. As the national university we have a particular responsibility to develop new knowledge and capability in relation to First Nations issues and priorities. We build on pathfinding work in relation to Indigenous health and well-being, justice systems, economic self-determination, knowledge systems, sovereignty, and professional capability building. Led by, and developed with, Indigenous colleagues and communities, we advance pathfinding work in Indigenous health, justice systems, economic self-determination, knowledge systems, and sovereignty, building on our longstanding research in archaeology, anthropology, and history.

Peace, Security and Prosperity. Good governance, national security and defence, and economic prosperity are the essential foundations for successful nations. Their interdependence means that shocks in one area will impact all. The current context of global uncertainty makes these shocks more likely. Effective responses require expertise and capability that can operate across and with these interdependencies and be sensitive to context. Drawing on our expertise in governance, security, and economic development, with unique understanding of Asia and the Pacific, we address the interdependent foundations of successful nations in an era of increasing global uncertainty.

Planetary Health and Planetary Systems. Securing sustainable solutions to our planetary challenges requires us to think and act differently. This requires action across a range of areas from air quality to resource extraction, food systems to wildlife, human security to artificial intelligence, energy to water. We bring together our global expertise across disciplines to generate transformative, actionable solutions to planetary challenges supporting Net Zero 2050 and nature-positive legislation.

Understanding Ourselves and Our Place. Questions of identity, civility, and cohesion are central to our understanding of who we are and what we owe to each other and to our role in the region. We draw on, and combine, our concentration of excellence in humanities disciplines to address questions of identity, civility, and cohesion through multidisciplinary approaches that bring together humanities, social, natural, and life sciences to explore ethical and moral dimensions of our existence.



Impact



Research

Context

- The University is a leading research-intensive institution which plays a distinctive and essential role in the Australian tertiary education and research landscape. We are a steward of essential shared resources through our infrastructure and collections.
- We are positioned to provide the Australian Government with a unique platform in which to invest for research quality and impact, and in fields which provide sovereign capabilities.
- Our research is broad, and we have expertise in fundamental as well as applied research.
- We make a distinctive contribution to the Asia-Pacific region through our research portfolio.

Direction

- ANU will be known as the place where researchers work on the questions that matter to the nation, and the world. We work collaboratively with partners, stakeholders and communities to undertake this work.
- We will cement our unique role in the Australian context through purposeful and judicious investment of the National Institutes Grant.
- We will grow and sustain our researcher community across the pipeline through leading HDR training, strategic and equitable hiring, and support for progression.
- We are thoughtful and deliberate in our connection of research to education.

Possible actions

- Target investment in researcher talent – at all levels – to grow our impact.
- Develop our approach to distribution of the National Institutes Grant including rigorous tests of what best serves the national interest.
- Implement rigorous developmental reviews of academic units.
- Invest in a program of research infrastructure renewal and expansion.
- Support researchers to deploy technologies – including AI – where appropriate to their disciplines.
- Streamline processes to reduce friction in academic workload.



Education

Context

- The University is an anchor provider of high-quality research-led education in ACT. We attract brilliant students and provide a personalised, purposeful and human-centric education which is more than a transaction.
- We are proud of our campus environment and residential experience which sustain a thriving student community.
- Patterns of demand for education are changing, and the University needs to respond and reinforce the relevance of human-to-human learning which prepares students for co-existence with AI.
- The Universities Accord challenges all universities to place increasing emphasis on student equity.

Direction

- ANU will be the destination of choice for students from across Australia with pathways and support to enable all students to succeed.
- We will be known, and celebrated, for a student experience centred on our human-scale campus and the community of students and staff.
- We will educate students from around the world in diverse cohorts, and play a distinctive role in educating leaders across the Asia-Pacific region.
- We will have a distinctive portfolio of programs which are attractive to students, are delivered to high standards, and provide graduates with purposeful options. Our graduates will be AI-ready.
- We will actively manage our program architecture, aligning our areas of excellence with demand and sustainability.

Possible actions

- Enable new pathways into our degree programs to increase access for students from across Australia.
- Reduce financial barriers for students otherwise unable to access the University.
- Review, refresh and reinvent our programs to ensure attractiveness and relevance. Use efficient program architecture to support quality delivery.
- Develop new offers and delivery models to expand our reach, including better enabling working professionals to access postgraduate programs.
- Invest in the student experience with a focus on ensuring that every student can succeed.
- Support and reward excellence and innovation in teaching.



Spheres of influence

Context

- The University is a permeable institution with myriad connections across governments, civil society and industry. We operate simultaneously in multiple spheres of influence: local, national, the Asia-Pacific region, and internationally.
- We need to be connected to the worlds outside the university for our research and education to be relevant, for us to have impact, and to play our role as a civic anchor in our community.
- While we work globally, we have a specific mandate for – and depth and breadth in – engagement with the Asia-Pacific region.
- We both bring people to Australia and support our staff and students to be outwardly mobile.

Direction

- ANU will be even more open, more engaging, and more outward-looking, across our research and education. We will support collaboration-building – focusing on mutual benefit – to be a partner of choice.
- We will be known as a high-quality, welcoming and enriching destination for international students and staff where diverse cultures are celebrated. We will attract more international students through both direct entry and pathways.
- We will be an essential civic university for the ACT as a complement to our national purpose, regional leadership, and international connections.
- We will use our convening power to be a place where the most important national conversations are held.
- We expect, and enable, international mobility for staff and students.

Possible actions

- Make our campuses more open and increase the number of external visitors, including through more conferences and events. Use campus master-planning to find long-term ways of increasing our physical permeability and contribution to Canberra.
- Grow our international student community, and broaden the range of countries from which our students come.
- Build transnational education operations and increase the availability of pathways for student articulation from our overseas partners.
- Invest in our convening capacity and relationship-building across public and private partners, and use our campus assets to increase our impact.
- Build our alumni, supporter and donor engagement activities to increase our impact.
- Invest in a visiting scholars program to draw talented researchers to ANU temporarily, and support our people to engage with overseas partners through travel.



Enablers

Context

- The University is the steward of significant public and private investment. We plan for the long term and need the ongoing financial stability and sustainability to ensure that we can operate today and reinvest for the future.
- We steward more than \$2 billion in research infrastructure and 40 national facilities, assets of national significance that require sustained investment and active management, not just maintenance.
- Our operating costs have historically outpaced revenue growth, and the budget model has not consistently directed resources toward strategic priorities.
- Our ways of working also need renewal to be fit-for-purpose.

Direction

- ANU will be a well-organised, and well-run, university which achieves its strategic goals through effective governance, management and leadership.
- Our systems, policies, processes and cultures will align to support an environment of high performance and high impact.
- Our budget model, governance frameworks and workforce planning will direct resources toward strategic priorities.
- We will use our own expertise to build the capabilities and resilience needed to respond to the changing environment.

Possible actions

- Implement a growth-focused budget model, effective planning cycle, and developmental reviews for academic units and portfolios.
- Integrate governance, data, risk, evaluation, planning and strategy – and academic expertise – to ensure that we have all the information, insight and foresight to make good decisions.
- Build the institutional infrastructure for targeted decisions over a multi-year planning horizon linked to resource allocation choices.
- Replace legacy systems and find ways to deploy new technologies to find efficient solutions.
- Invest in our campus to provide a more consistently high quality learning, research and work environment, and to be attractive to our partners.
- Deliver our 2040 Below Zero commitment.



Next steps



Please provide your input to the Strategy through the survey, a facilitated session, or directly to: strategy.codesign@anu.edu.au.

All codesign inputs received by 13th May will be synthesised and considered for the next iteration of the Strategy.



That next version of the Strategy will include a timeline and prioritisation approach, recognising that some actions need to be higher priority than others.

There will also be a report on how the codesign approach informed the Strategy.



The final Strategy document will be in prose and illustrated with examples which bring to life the current and future state of the University.

The aim is to publish the final Strategy in mid August 2026 following approval by the University Council.

To find out more about the Strategy development process, the staff and student survey, or find out more about attending a facilitated session, please see: anu.edu.au/about/anu-university-strategy-community-engagement



Thank you

Contact us

The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 2600

strategy.codesign@anu.edu.au



Australian
National
University

TEQSA PROVIDER ID: PRV12002 (AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY)
CRICOS PROVIDER CODE: 00120C