

UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021



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Mission

Universities Australia exists to secure a strong, vibrant and internationally competitive university system that underpins Australia's social and economic prosperity and creates individual opportunity.

Introduction

Universities Australia is the peak body representing Australia's 39 comprehensive universities. Its primary role is to advocate for regulatory, policy and fiscal settings conducive to a world-class university system.

For hundreds of years, universities have existed as institutions that seek to further human endeavour through the distribution of knowledge and the embodiment of the ideals of free inquiry, equality and independence.

In modern times, universities have evolved to play a central role in social and economic progress. They build a nation's human capital by developing and disseminating knowledge, education, research, and independent and informed public commentary.

Our education system, including universities, is fundamental to our democracy and serves as a social leveller.

As Australia's economy transitions from a heavy reliance on natural resources and manufacturing to a new era where skills, knowledge and ideas will become our most precious commodities, we face a period of immense change.

Australia's universities are pivotal to that transition. They:

- produce highly-skilled graduates for our changing workforce;
- conduct vital research that leads to innovation;
- contribute directly to the economy;
- participate in public debate; and
- promote inclusion and equality in a time of almost unprecedented upheaval.

The role of universities also extends beyond our country's borders, providing vital institutional links to an international knowledge-base. Students and academics promote and strengthen Australia's global role as they engage with international institutions, groups and communities.

Over the next three years, Australia's higher education sector will contend with constrained public budgets, economic transition, a federal election, greater international competition, the emergence of technologies leading to new jobs and industries, and an increasingly complex higher education system.

In its role as the sector's peak body, Universities Australia advocates for public policy settings that enable universities to pursue their missions for the benefit of students, families and the nation. We pursue policy that supports our university system to position Australia for long-term economic and social success.

The Strategic Plan enables UA to progress its members' agreed priorities while ensuring the organisation is alert to emerging issues and new opportunities for advocacy.

Values

In every facet of its policy, decision-making and operations, UA observes the following core values:

- a) *Unity*: UA provides a strong and unified voice for the sector, with members who work respectfully together;
- b) *Proactivity*: UA welcomes and actively pursues new ideas and approaches that benefit its members and their national goals;
- c) *Inclusion*: UA provides members with every opportunity to contribute to UA policy and strategic initiatives;
- d) *Impartiality*: UA engages with all members and stakeholders equally and promotes evidence-based policy and practice;
- e) *Integrity*: UA observes the highest levels of ethics and confidentiality in all its dealings; and
- f) *International*: UA adopts a global outlook in all that it does.

Functions

With the resources available, Universities Australia undertakes the following functions on behalf of its members, for whole-of-sector benefit and as determined by the Board:

Function	Activities
<i>Policy development and political advocacy</i>	<p>UA undertakes parliamentary and campaign advocacy to initiate, pursue and support a wide range of policy objectives. It:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeks to influence policy proactively – as well as respond to emerging challenges and issues; • develops policies based on sound evidence, informed by views and interests of members, stakeholders and the public; • develops policy positions that focus on solutions and practical implementation; and • evaluates the effectiveness and relevance of policies put forward by political parties and relevant stakeholders.
<i>Positioning and profile-raising</i>	<p>UA lifts the public profile of the value of universities through media commentary, social media channels, public awareness campaigns, events, and member information and engagement to support its functions and policy priorities.</p>
<i>Coordination of collective sector effort</i>	<p>UA coordinates whole-of-sector initiatives where members agree that impact, reputation and/or efficiency would be greater than if individual institutions were to pursue them in their own right, or where they would not be pursued at all. These may include, but are not limited to, negotiating international agreements and commercial licenses, and facilitating improvements to sector-wide capacity and capability.</p>

As part of its core functions, UA does not provide:

- formal education and training programs to the sector;
- supplier or vendor sourcing or negotiation;
- industrial relations advice or support; or
- access to the sector as a gateway or channel for marketing or sales.

Strategic Priorities 2017-2021

The matters listed in these priority areas (in no particular order) may change depending on available resources and the external political and policy environment.

Universities Australia will pursue its strategic priorities by:

- working with industry and other stakeholders and federal policy makers in a mutually-respectful, constructive and transparent manner;
- continually scanning the external environment; and
- engaging with like-minded organisations on common objectives.

Our priorities are enabled by an operational structure that ensures strong corporate governance, financial management, human resources, events, strategic communications, ICT and knowledge management, and legal and legislative compliance.

Function Area 1: Policy Development and Political Advocacy

Regulation:

Work with Government to secure a transparent regulatory framework that maintains the integrity of the system while:

- encouraging innovation, responsiveness and adaptability;
- reducing duplication;
- minimising unnecessary compliance burdens; and
- preserving institutional autonomy.

Investment:

Seek to secure a long-term, sustainable and internationally competitive university system that is affordable for both students and taxpayers.

Learning and Teaching:

Promote policies and programs that support teaching and learning quality to assure successful student and graduate outcomes and educational value-add.

Research:

Advocate for policies that support and value both fundamental and applied research impact in all fields, and maintain Australia's world-class research system.

Participation, Access and Diversity:

Encourage policies and programs that enable and support any person with the ability to obtain a high quality university education to do so, and support diversity within universities.

Student Choice:

Pursue policies that support existing and prospective students, through the provision of accurate, comprehensive and accessible information, to make well-informed institutional and study choices in their own best interests.

International education and research:

Foster policies that support and enhance Australian international and transnational higher education, and support staff/student mobility.

Copyright and information policy:

Pursue the sector's best long-term interests in policy relating to access, use and protection of information, including material under copyright.

Function Area 2: Positioning and Profile-Raising

Public awareness campaign:

To build public understanding of the role of universities in underpinning Australia's social and economic prosperity.

Higher Education Conference:

The annual Higher Education Conference brings together thought leaders in the sector to share knowledge and information on higher education policy issues and provides the opportunity for profile strengthening and capacity building.

UA History Project:

To commission a written history of the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee/Universities Australia.

Function Area 3: Coordination of Collective Sector Effort

Respect. Now. Always. campaign:

To implement a sector-wide campaign to prevent and address sexual assault and harassment in university communities.

International engagement and collaboration:

To negotiate and implement international agreements, information exchange and collaboration.

Copyright negotiations:

To negotiate whole-of-sector licenses to maximise efficiency and secure the best possible commercial outcome for the sector.

Work integrated learning:

Working with industry and governments to address the cost and lift the number of work placements across all disciplines, including in the health workforce.

Professional associations:

To work with professional associations to streamline and clarify certification and accreditation processes.

Philanthropy: capacity and capability:

To undertake activities that support universities in building fundraising capacity and capability.

Teaching Innovation:

To consider activities that support university teaching innovation and excellence.

Indigenous Strategy:

To develop a strategy for increasing the rate of participation in higher education by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Performance

As an advocacy body operating in the contemporary political environment, Universities Australia cannot determine the outcome of the political decision-making process. Its efforts are on ensuring that policy decision-making is as well informed as possible from the perspective of universities contributing the national good and on the contributions that are within its power to make.

Universities Australia's performance will be assessed based on the Board's view that the organisation has dedicated all reasonable resources to fulfilling the objectives and aims outlined in this plan.

In forming its view, the Board may take into account:

- the organisation's public profile and reputation;
- involvement and contribution to external decision-making processes;
- political access; and
- any activities, deliverables or accountabilities set out in the Annual Work Plans.

The Board's view will also be informed by reports presented in Board and Plenary meetings and any additional communications as required or requested.

UA will also determine the need to undertake an external peer review process at specified intervals to further inform its operations.