

Research Strategy

2025–2030



Federation University Australia

Our purpose is to transform lives and enhance communities as Victoria's regional university

Federation is deeply embedded in our regional communities, with campuses in Ballarat, Berwick, Gippsland, Melbourne CBD and the Wimmera. We serve Victorian, Australian and international communities by enriching cultural and community life, elevating public awareness of educational, scientific and artistic developments, promoting critical and free enquiry, and informing intellectual discourse and public debate within the University and in the wider society.

We provide and maintain a teaching and learning environment of excellent quality, offering world-class higher education and vocational training. We undertake scholarship, pure and applied research, invention, innovation, education and consultancy of international standing and apply these for the benefit and wellbeing of our Victorian, Australian and international communities.

We apply our expertise and resources to affirm the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Australians in the University's teaching, learning, research and advancement of knowledge activities. This enables the University to contribute to the realisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations and the safeguarding of the ancient and rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritages.

Federation University Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where our campuses, centres and field stations are located and we pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and First Nations People.

The Aboriginal Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where our campuses, centres and field stations are located include:

Ballarat: Wadawurrung

Berwick: Boon Wurrung

Gippsland: Gunaikurnai Nations

Melbourne: Wurundjeri

Nanya Station: Mutthi Mutthi and Barkindji

Wimmera: Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagulk



We are redefining tertiary education through the Federation University Co-operative Model

At Federation, we are reshaping the way we transform lives and enhance communities by adopting a co-operative (co-op) learning model across the University, TAFE and research – with strong industry partnerships and by preparing highly skilled future ready graduates.

We integrate our academic study with practical work experiences and paid placements for academic credit. Students apply what they learn in the classroom directly in the workplace, while also building networks and gaining industry insights.

Co-op is also increasingly embedded in research through our industry partnerships and strong global collaborations. In our Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) environment, co-op involves working with industry partners to co-design, co-supervise and co-fund HDR projects and provide opportunities for our PhD candidates to undertake research internships with industry.

Federation's Graduate Research School has a long history of success in HDR industry partnerships, recently ranking #1 in Victoria and #5 nationally for the proportion of our HDR candidates engaged with industry, while also rated second in Australia, and first in Victoria for postgraduate employment rate.

Our research priorities align with Federation's vision to become Australia's leading co-operative university



Front cover image created using funding from the Australian Research Council and co-designed with Aboriginal peoples across Australia, for Professor Bindi Bennett's Discovery Indigenous Project (IN230100002) Utilising Simulation to develop culturally responsive social workers.

Our Research

Federation delivers applied research and innovation that drives the economic and social prosperity of our regions and the communities we serve in Australia and around the world.

Our research is deeply integrated with our teaching and learning, providing students with opportunities to engage in research throughout their academic journey. We focus on co-operative partnerships, particularly regionally meaningful place-based partnerships with industry, government, and other relevant stakeholders to deliver research-informed solutions.

Research at Federation has seen significant improvement over the past decade, highlighted by an increasing number of quality publications, increased output and external grant funding. This progress includes year-on-year growth in grant income and successes in previously unattained grant programs such as Australian Research Council Fellowships.

Our research excellence is reflected in the Excellence for Research Australia assessment, where Federation was rated at or above world standard in 80% of our submitted Fields of Research.¹ We have also seen a year-on-year increase in the number of Federation researchers being cited as in the top two per cent in their field.²



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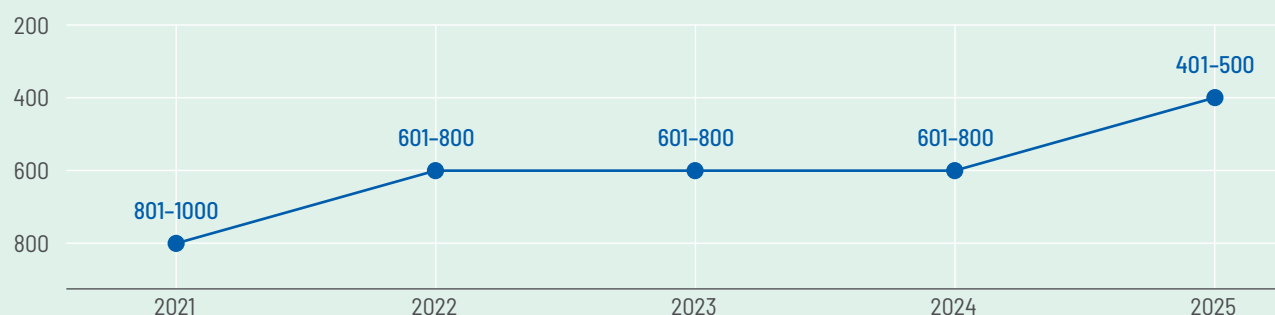
Key Thematic Areas

Federation University has five main inter- and trans-disciplinary research areas which are regionally relevant and globally significant and related to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

	Indigenous and Reconciliation	Engage in self-determining, reciprocal, and ethical partnerships with stakeholders, such as community and industry, to address key regional, national and international matters	 
	Global-Regional Health and Wellbeing	Approaches to prevent disease, manage chronic physical and mental health disorders and promote healthy living across all ages locally and globally	
	Co-operative Industrial Transformation	Boosting tech capabilities to improve efficiency (AI, data science, IoT, automation and optimisation), enhance security (energy and cyber) and drive innovation across industries	  
	Sustainable Environments	Collaborating with industry to address local environmental and community needs and challenges, including sustainable management of natural resources, net-zero transitions through adoption of new and innovative technologies, climate and disaster resilience and adaptation, and ecosystem conservation and restoration	    
	Advancing Society and Education	Partnering with regional communities to improve education participation from early childhood to post-secondary, build seamless employment pathways, promote equity and enhance sustainability and liveability	 
Federation's research strategy is grounded in co-operative, place-based partnerships with industry, government and community – an approach that directly reflects the intent of SDG 17: to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.			

Improvements in research have contributed to Federation's ascent in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings over the past five years.

Rank change over year for the period of 2021-2025



1. 2024 Excellence for Research Australia assessment. 2. Stanford/Elsevier Top 2% Scientists List 2024

Strategic Drivers

Building on the momentum of Federation's growing research achievements, there is significant potential for further growth and impact.

Federation's strategic research priorities for 2025 and beyond aim to position the University as an exemplar in global co-operative research and to maximise the impact of our groundbreaking research for our communities – local, national and global.

To achieve this, we are committed to fostering a research environment that supports growth, attracts high-performing researchers, and promotes collaboration across disciplines and with industry partners.

Our strategic research priorities for 2030:

- 1 Indigenous and Reconciliation Research
- 2 An Exemplar in Global Co-operative Research
- 3 Regional Relevance, National and Global Significance
- 4 Sustained Research Excellence
- 5 Increase Capacity, Capability and Collaboration



2030 targets

#1 in Australia for
Co-operative and HDR
Engagement with Industry

Top 100 in Times Higher
Education (THE) Impact Rankings

Rank 301–400 in the
THE World University Rankings

Rank 101–150 in the
Young University Rankings

Rank top 500 of the QS World
University Rankings

Grow external research income to

\$30 million

Grow domestic HDR enrolments

by **10%** each year

Grow international HDR enrolments

by **50%** in 2025 and

by **10%** each following year

Driver 1:

Indigenous and Reconciliation Research

We will engage in self-determining, ethical, reciprocal, and transformational Indigenous and Reconciliation research.

Our objectives are to:

1.1	Grow Indigenous research: Increase the number of Indigenous researchers and HDR students.
1.2	Increase overall research capacity: Increase the capacity of the university to engage in self-determining, ethical, and reciprocal Indigenous and Reconciliation research.
1.3	Implement an Indigenous Research Plan: We will develop an Indigenous Research Plan under the leadership of the Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous and the Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor Reconciliation.
1.4	Recognise and respect Indigenous knowledge: Ensure all University research adheres to the principles of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual property (ICIP), Free Prior and informed Consent (FRIC), and data sovereignty.
1.5	Be a national leader: Indigenous and Reconciliation research will be led by the National Centre for Reconciliation, Truth and Justice.



Driver 2:

An Exemplar in Global Co-operative Research

We promote innovation and translate research findings into practical applications. Industry connection allows our researchers to explore real-world challenges and make a difference to the communities we serve.

Our objective is to be an exemplar in global co-operative research and to reach #1 in Australia for HDR engagement with industry.

To achieve this, we will focus on:

2.1	Global co-operative partnerships: Build strategic partnerships with local, national and international institutions, industry, government and community to deliver research-informed solutions, including developing a significant program of offshore HDR students.
2.2	Industry linked HDRs: Increase the number of HDR students working on industry-linked projects that are co-designed, co-funded, and co-supervised by industry partners and offer internship experiences. We will continue the HDR Co-op Scholarship program to provide stipend scholarships that support these industry-linked projects.
2.3	Innovation hubs: Establish dedicated innovation hubs to support startups and entrepreneurial endeavours originating from our research that involve our undergraduate and postgraduate students and inculcate a research and innovation culture across our university community.
2.4	Research led teaching: Integrate research ideas, methods, and opportunities into our teaching and learning, providing students with opportunities to engage in research across their academic journey.



Driver 3:

Regional Relevance, National and Global Significance

We aim to establish a legacy of research that inspires future generations. Our research will contribute to global sustainable development and help address pressing challenges including societal wellbeing, environmental stewardship and economic development from the perspective of regional communities.

We will strive to maximise our impact and contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, evidenced by achieving a ranking within the top 100 universities in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings.

Our focus will be on:

3.1	Regional relevance: Research will directly benefit our regional and outer-metropolitan communities, for sectors such as agriculture, environment, energy, emerging technologies, regional health (e.g., ageing, mental health), economics and education.
3.2	Community-driven research: We will involve local communities, including Indigenous communities, in the research process, ensuring their needs and perspectives are incorporated.
3.3	National significance: Research will be aligned with national research priorities.
3.4	Global integration: Our research will address global challenges – from renewable energy to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence – with an emphasis on sustainability and ethical impacts.



Driver 4:

Sustained Research Excellence

We will continue to cultivate a culture of research excellence and enhance our international reputation for the quality and impact of our research.

We aim to:

4.1	Grow external research income: Increase external research income by 11% per annum in order to reach our target of \$30m by 2030. We will provide funding support to increase awareness of funding opportunities and enhance the quality and success rate of grant applications and researcher development.
4.2	Diversify research funding: Leverage existing relationships and develop a targeted approach to potential funding sources, including government grants, industry partnerships, alumni and philanthropy, research collaboration, international grants, sponsorship, and commercialisation. We will leverage our co-operative partnerships to achieve a significant step-change in industry funding by 2030.
4.3	Grow volume and quality of research output: Increase the volume of publications by 3% per annum while maintaining quality indexed by at least 65% of publications in Q1 and 75% in Q1 and Q2 outlets. We will grow the output of individual researchers as well as publications in key research areas. We will accelerate research output by appointing nationally and internationally recognised adjuncts, hosting visiting researchers and industry partners.
4.4	Increase the impact of research publications: Publish in high impact journals (Q1) and with reputable publishers and utilise digital platforms to reach a broader audience. Focus on enhancing citations, influencing practice within a discipline, and achieving policy impacts.
4.5	Climb global rankings: Continue to improve our global rankings, targeting 301-400 in THE World University Rankings, 101-150 in Young University Rankings, top 100 in the THE Impact Rankings and top 500 in the QS World University Rankings.



Driver 5:

Increase Capacity, Capability and Collaboration

We will foster a research environment and leadership that supports growth. We will invest in enhancing researchers' knowledge, research skills, and networks, ensuring they remain leaders in their respective fields. To boost research capacity and performance it is crucial to foster dynamic collaborations internally and externally.

Our objectives are to:

5.1	Enhance performance through critical mass: Align research staff with centres, leverage scale advantages, foster closer relationships between centres and institutes, tackle complex challenges, improve societal impact, reduce duplication, and optimise resource use.
5.2	Invest in and develop talent: Attract and retain high-performing researchers and provide them with the resources and support needed to excel, including access to a comprehensive researcher capability framework. We will invest in early career researchers, fostering a culture of support and growth, celebrate research success through awards and public recognition, develop clear criteria to evaluate research performance, and ensure effective team management and inclusive decision making, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered.
5.3	Grow HDR students: Attract high-performing and talented HDR students and facilitate an excellent postgraduate research student experience through a high-quality training environment and supportive culture. We aim to grow international HDR enrolments by 50% in 2025 and by 10% each following year. We will grow domestic HDR enrolments by 10% each year.
5.4	Live our Values: Promote an inclusive, collegial and collaborative work environment encouraging innovation and creativity. Foster inter, multi, and trans-disciplinary collaboration between researchers, industry (co-op), and our communities.
5.5	Invest in Research Infrastructure: Enhance research capabilities by sustainable investment in Research Management Systems and Research Support functions, utilise collaborative teaching and learning spaces for research purposes, and grow research equipment purchase and maintenance by securing grants and sharing facilities with other universities and organisations.

Living our values

Federation University Australia's shared values help us to build our culture as a strong and sustainable university, which serves as an exemplar to the communities we serve.



Inclusion

We champion access and inclusion for all



Innovation

We innovate to transform



Excellence

We excel in all that we do



Empowerment

We respect and trust our people



Collaboration

We are stronger together



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