

Federation 2040:

A vision for Australia's
first co-operative
university

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



As Victoria's regional university, Federation University Australia is dedicated to delivering world-class, high-impact education, training and research for our communities.

We know that education and training transforms lives, strengthens communities and drives regional prosperity.

For over 150 years, this mission has guided us – and today, it matters more than ever.

Across the regions we serve, from the Central Highlands around Ballarat, to the growth corridors of Greater South-East Melbourne, to the communities of Gippsland and the Wimmera, employers face critical skills shortages.

Over the next decade, around 280,000 extra workers – including tens of thousands of new nurses, teachers, engineers, technicians and other professionals – will be required across our regions. At the same time, rapid advances in technology and AI, along with shifts in productivity, health and climate, demand that we continually upskill and reskill the current workforce. Traditional pathways cannot meet these challenges alone.

Federation University is bridging this gap – delivering the skilled workforce and research and innovation our regions need to thrive.

We are on track to become Australia's first co-operative university – a model of tertiary education where learning is fused with real-world experience at every step. As a dual sector institution, we are leveraging our historic strengths in graduate employability and skills development to integrate the Co-op model into every course we offer.

This means that whether a learner enrolls in nursing, IT, arts, education or any other higher education or TAFE course, they will graduate not just with a degree, but with significant industry experience and employer connections in their field. This approach to learning, teaching and research will be at the cutting edge of digital, powered by AI-enabled infrastructure, smart systems and precision support tools, to prepare not only learners but also their employers for the future of work.

By producing talented local graduates who are already embedded with regional employers, the Co-op model will directly drive economic growth and development in regional Victoria. Learners earn while they learn, employers get access to emerging talent and our regions reap the benefits of an educated workforce that stays and thrives locally.

At the same time, our research remains actively aligned to regional needs. From partnering with local hospitals on health innovations to working with local farms on sustainability solutions – our research is practical and impactful, delivering real outcomes for our communities and industries.

Our direction is clear: we must continue evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of our regions and learners.

That means anticipating how industries will shift and ensuring our courses and research stay ahead of the curve. It means exploring new ways to deliver education and training that are flexible, inclusive and technologically enriched. And it means remaining agile and financially resilient in a sector that will undoubtedly see more disruption and reform in the coming years.

This strategy sets out how we will meet the challenges and seize the opportunities in this changing environment. Above all, it ensures we continue to deliver the transformative education, training and research that our regions need to thrive.



Duncan Bentley
Professor Duncan Bentley
Vice-Chancellor and President
Federation University Australia

Foreword

Strategic Plan on a page

Federation's strategy aligns our priorities with the needs of our regions.

Everything we do, from education and training to research and innovation, directly benefits the learners, employers and communities we serve.

By clearly defining our vision, strategic drivers and enablers, this plan focuses our resources on what matters most: delivering an outstanding learner experience, a skilled workforce and innovative research and solutions that drive the growth of our regions.

Federation University Australia Strategic Plan

Purpose	To deliver the transformative education, training and research that our regions need to thrive.	Why we exist						
Vision	To build a co-operative university model that responds to the needs of our students and regions.	The desired future state to deliver our purpose						
Living Values		The values that guide our culture						
Strategic Drivers	<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="92 1406 231 1467"> Daring to be different Building a new model of co-operative education and research that seamlessly integrates work and study. </td> <td data-bbox="300 1406 486 1496"> Supporting sustainable and thriving regions Equipping communities with the talent, knowledge and innovation for the future. </td> <td data-bbox="518 1406 710 1527"> Empowering learners and expanding opportunity Offering outstanding educational experiences and expanding access to reach more learners in the regions. </td> <td data-bbox="737 1406 933 1527"> Prioritising First Peoples' and reconciliation matters Advancing First Peoples' leadership and success and embedding First Peoples' knowledges, histories and cultures respectfully. </td> <td data-bbox="957 1406 1157 1496"> Remaining proudly local, with global reach Staying deeply connected to place while pursuing global co-operative opportunities. </td> <td data-bbox="1173 1406 1364 1527"> Fostering an inclusive and rewarding workplace Delivering rewarding careers that make a difference in a workplace that values people. </td> </tr> </table>	Daring to be different Building a new model of co-operative education and research that seamlessly integrates work and study.	Supporting sustainable and thriving regions Equipping communities with the talent, knowledge and innovation for the future.	Empowering learners and expanding opportunity Offering outstanding educational experiences and expanding access to reach more learners in the regions.	Prioritising First Peoples' and reconciliation matters Advancing First Peoples' leadership and success and embedding First Peoples' knowledges, histories and cultures respectfully.	Remaining proudly local, with global reach Staying deeply connected to place while pursuing global co-operative opportunities.	Fostering an inclusive and rewarding workplace Delivering rewarding careers that make a difference in a workplace that values people.	Focus areas for 2026 and beyond
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Our Purpose

Federation's purpose is to deliver the transformative education, training and research that our regions need to thrive.

As the only university headquartered in regional Victoria, serving communities across Ballarat, the Wimmera, Berwick, Gippsland and Melbourne, Federation exists to deliver the education, training and research that help our regions thrive.

Our purpose is grounded in impact – supporting economic, social and cultural outcomes through inclusive learning and practical research.

We support tens of thousands of learners each year and have more than 130,000 alumni, many from diverse backgrounds who continue to live in the regions. We're proud to lead the nation in access and equity, with the highest proportion of first-in-family learners in Australia. Our commitment to widening participation is at the heart of everything we do.



Our vision

To build a co-operative university model that responds to the needs of our students and regions.

By 2040, Federation University will be recognised globally for its pioneering Co-operative Education Model, demonstrating how a regional university can spark transformation across communities.

We'll grow alongside our regions, expanding both TAFE and university enrolments to meet evolving workforce needs. Together with employers, industry and government, we'll co-design education, training and research that delivers real-world impact. Our campuses and technology parks will be vibrant centres of activity, powering job creation and enterprise growth across regional Victoria. At the same time, we'll extend our global reach through strategic partnerships and a strong international portfolio, connecting regional learners to global opportunities and contributing research that solves global challenges.

Every learner at Federation – whether in TAFE or higher education – will gain hands-on experience through structured, work-based learning. This model will produce highly skilled graduates who drive innovation and prosperity in their hometowns and beyond.

Outcomes and impact will measure our success

We will measure success by the impact we deliver for our regions – economically, socially and environmentally.

Federation's Co-op model and industry partnerships are expected to contribute over \$2 billion in direct economic output by 2040. Our campuses and technology parks will be hubs of enterprise, creating thousands of new jobs through industry co-location and start-ups. We will scale up research to drive innovation for local industries, solving real-world challenges and strengthening regional competitiveness.

We are committed to sustainability and achieving Net Zero emissions by 2033. This goal reflects our responsibility to future generations and our leadership in climate action across regional Victoria.

We will grow student participation in line with demand, ensuring more people gain the skills they need and more employers find the talent they're looking for. We'll track the number of graduates filling jobs in our regions, helping meet the projected need for 280,000 additional workers by 2035.

We'll partner with our communities to raise post-secondary education participation in our regions to help deliver the Australian Government's ambition to lift participation in vocational and higher education to 80% by 2050. This will help build a more skilled population and a fairer, more inclusive society.

Our strategy is built on a needs-first approach – starting with the priorities of our students and regional employers – delivered through an innovative Co-operative Education Model that integrates work and study and underpinned by a deep commitment to equity and regional development.



Living Values

Our Living Values, developed by our staff, underpin our strategic plan and guide our culture and decision-making.



Inclusion

We champion access and equity for all, creating a welcoming, supportive environment for our diverse learners and staff.



Collaboration

We are stronger together; teamwork and strong partnerships are at the heart of how we operate.



Innovation

We innovate to transform, embracing new ideas in teaching, research and operations to continually improve and stay ahead.



Empowerment

We support and trust our people, empowering learners, staff and partners to contribute, lead and succeed.



Excellence

We strive for excellence in all that we do, holding ourselves to high standards of quality, integrity and impact.

These values are not just words – they are lived daily through initiatives like our Co-op partnerships (Collaboration), our inclusive learner and staff support programs (Inclusion), our continuous improvements and accolades (Innovation and Excellence) and our emphasis on staff and learner voice (Empowerment). By living our values, we cultivate the kind of university community that can achieve the ambitious goals set out in this strategic plan.

Co-op value proposition

We're redefining the traditional tertiary education experience through the Federation University Co-operative Model. By embedding employers and industry in the co-design, co-development and co-delivery of learning and research, Federation is building a new model of university that directly responds to changing learner expectations, regional workforce needs and government policy priorities.





Driver 1

Daring to be different:

Building a new model of co-operative education and research that seamlessly integrates work and study.

We are embedding co-operative education across every level of study – from certificate to PhD – making real-world learning the hallmark of a Federation experience.

Inspired by global leaders in Co-op education and tailored to Australia's needs, our model integrates work and study without extending time to graduation. Learners gain valuable experience while earning their qualifications, accelerating career outcomes and improving graduate salaries.

This is not traditional tertiary education – Federation will be a new kind of university, using Co-op as the engine to deliver unique value to our students and regions.

We're committed to remaining among the top universities in Australia for employability and starting salary. By enabling placements alongside study, we'll ensure graduates are ready to work from day one – with many learners transitioning directly into roles with their placement hosts.

Through paid placements we'll further breakdown financial barriers – boosting equity, access and making education and real-world experience more accessible to a diverse range of learners.

Expanding Co-op requires deep partnerships and a shift in how we operate. We put learners and employers at the centre of everything we do – aligning our teaching directly with industry needs.

The Co-op model is embedded in our research through strong industry partnerships and global collaborations. In our Higher Degrees by Research (HDR) programs, this includes co-designing, co-supervising and co-funding projects with industry partners, alongside opportunities for PhD candidates to undertake research internships. Our growing network of Co-op partners includes global firms like IBM, Ernst & Young and Accenture, who co-recruit and train learners on campus.

By 2040, we aim to have thousands of active partners across diverse sectors – co-designing curriculum, hosting learners, upskilling staff and co-investing in facilities like our campus-based technology parks. These partnerships will create a strong pipeline of talent research, innovation and opportunity, with employers turning to Federation as their university of choice.

Co-op will shape how we deliver education, research and support services. It will become a whole-of-university ethos – guiding every decision and driving strategic transformation.

This bold direction draws inspiration from our heritage as the University of Ballarat, where the motto 'Dare to be Different' was enshrined in our Coat of Arms – a call to challenge convention and lead with purpose. Today, that spirit lives on in our commitment to co-operative education as a transformative force for our learners and regions.

Driver 2

Supporting sustainable and thriving regions:

Equipping communities with the talent, knowledge and innovation for the future.

As a regional university, our communities' success is our success. It's why we align our courses and research with regional development goals – addressing skill shortages, supporting innovation and partnering on local solutions, from health to clean energy.

Federation will build the future workforce for regional growth industries and vital public services.

We will expand learner places and offerings in high-demand fields identified by local employers and government – training more nurses, allied health and aged care workers; more teachers and early childhood educators; more engineers and technicians for renewable energy and infrastructure; and more business and IT professionals to support regional enterprise.

Using data from Jobs and Skills Australia and the Victorian Skills Plan, we will continually adapt our course mix by location, ensuring we remain agile and responsive to regional needs.

To accelerate our impact, we will pursue strategic growth opportunities, including acquisitions, takeovers and new ventures that strengthen our presence and extend our reach.

Of course, thriving regions need more than jobs – they need culture, creativity and connection. Through flagship offerings like our Arts Academy in Ballarat, public lectures, events and community engagement, Federation will continue to contribute to a vibrant cultural and social landscape.

We will significantly grow our research and innovation capacity to support regional wellbeing, sustainability and productivity. Our Research Strategy will focus on priority themes aligned with regional needs, delivered through applied projects in partnership with local industries, councils and community groups.

By 2040, we aim to triple our external research income and increase our real-world impact, whether through new technologies, policy reform or best-practice models that can be implemented locally.

To meet these goals, Federation will invest in a digital-first, human-centred operating model. Our campuses will evolve into Co-op Innovation Precincts, dynamic, tech-enabled hubs where learners, employers and researchers collaborate on real-world challenges.

These precincts will support lifelong learning and be powered by partnered investment in emerging technologies. Our focus will continue to embed environmental sustainability and social wellbeing across all initiatives, helping our regions become models of sustainable living.

Our success will be measured by the outcomes we deliver: increased regional education participation, thousands of local graduates in critical industries, progress toward net zero, and tangible economic gains, adding an estimated \$2 billion annually to regional economies.

We want community leaders to say: "Federation University makes our region a better place to live." And we want our regional communities to be recognised nationally as highly liveable and socially inclusive.

Driver 3

Empowered learners and expanded opportunity:

Offering outstanding educational experiences and expanding access to reach more learners in the regions.

We are proud to lead Australia in social equity, with the highest proportion of first-in-family learners. Our diverse community is our strength and we are committed to creating a safe, respectful, and culturally rich environment for all. To ensure students are directly involved in shaping the policies and actions that affect their experience, we will work to elevate the student voice in decision-making across the university. We embrace the unique perspectives of First Peoples, people from diverse cultural, faith and linguistic backgrounds, people with a disability and people of all genders and sexualities.

At Federation, students come first. We are with our students all the way – providing a supportive, engaging and life-changing experience, from enrolment to graduation and beyond. Our approach is inclusive by design, ensuring every learner has the tools, environment and opportunities to thrive.

We have bold ambitions to grow our student numbers across the university and TAFE, ensuring more regional Victorians can access quality education close to home. We will expand outreach, scholarships and pathways, especially in regional areas and will help drive progress towards the Australian Government's attainment target of 80% participation in vocational and higher education by 2050.

As a dual-sector university, Federation offers seamless pathways between vocational and higher education, enabling learners to build skills, confidence and credentials at every stage of life. We will strengthen these pathways to support lifelong learning, career mobility and regional workforce development. By integrating TAFE and higher education through our Co-op model, we will deliver flexible, industry-connected learning experiences that respond to local needs and national priorities.

Through sustained support and innovation, we are committed to improving outcomes for underserved students, contributing to a fairer and more inclusive higher education system. By 2040, we aim to achieve parity in learner outcomes, so learners from equity backgrounds graduate at the same or higher rates as their peers.

Through flexible study options, precision support and industry-engaged learning, Federation learners will graduate with strong skills, confidence, networks and a track record of achievement. Every learner's journey will be enriching and career-transforming.







Driver 4

Prioritising First Peoples' and Reconciliation matters:

Advancing First Peoples' leadership and success and embedding First Peoples' knowledges, histories and cultures respectfully.

We will build on the foundational work of our Aboriginal Education Centre, expanding its role in fostering belonging, academic success and pathways into education, training and employment. We will grow our reach across regional and remote communities, strengthen culturally safe learning spaces and extend tailored mentoring and support programs. We will also expand nationally accredited First Peoples' language courses to celebrate, preserve and revitalise Indigenous languages, embedding cultural knowledge and pride across generations.

We will extend the impact of our National Centre for Reconciliation, Truth and Justice – Australia's leading academic think tank in reconciliation – positioning it as an international leader in reconciliation research, policy and public engagement. The Centre will play a central role in supporting Victoria's Treaty process and advancing truth-telling, healing and systemic change. Through high-profile events, community partnerships and collaborative research, the Centre will continue to shape national and international conversations and drive meaningful outcomes for First Peoples' communities.

Federation's founding legislation recognises our enduring responsibility to First Peoples' communities across teaching, learning, research and the advancement of knowledge.

We are committed to working in genuine partnership with First Peoples' communities to embed First Peoples' perspectives across all aspects of our operations – creating culturally immersive learning environments, celebrating culture and contributing to closing the education and employment gap.

To advance this whole-of-university priority, we will develop a comprehensive First Peoples' Strategy with measurable targets and transparent reporting. This will outline the University's plans to:

- Strengthen outreach and engagement with First Peoples' communities across our regions to enhance cultural responsiveness, trust and community benefit.
- Expand scholarships, paid placements and cadetships through our Co-op model to reduce financial barriers and support career progression.
- Embed First Peoples' knowledges across curricula, co-designed with Elders and Knowledge Holders.
- Ensure all graduates are culturally aware and capable of working respectfully with First Peoples' communities.
- Grow First Peoples'-led research and ethical data practices and protect Indigenous Culture Intellectual Property rights through co-designed processes and community-driven research to increase strong partnerships with Traditional Owners groups and First Peoples' organisations across Victoria and the nation.
- Increase First Peoples' representation among staff and leadership, supported by our First Peoples' Workforce Strategy.
- Create culturally safe campuses and inclusive policies that visibly celebrate First Peoples' success.

Through this sustained and strategic approach, Federation will embed First Peoples' and reconciliation matters as a shared responsibility and a visible, measurable commitment across every part of the university.

Driver 5

Remaining proudly local, with global reach:

Staying deeply connected to place while pursuing global co-operative opportunities.

We will focus on attracting a diverse international student cohort who are drawn to our co-operative, community-oriented model. These students enrich our campuses culturally and contribute to regional economies, often working and settling in communities and contributing to high-demand sectors like health and technology. This means managing growth carefully to ensure every learner, domestic and international, continues to experience the personalised, supportive education experience that defines Federation.

We will also grow and strengthen global partnerships that create new opportunities for our learners, staff and regions. This includes expanding our Co-op network internationally, enabling placements with multinational partners in their overseas operations. We will pursue joint research opportunities to address global challenges and deliver transnational education.

Our research will address global priorities solving regional and community challenges such as health and wellbeing, renewable energy, artificial intelligence and sustainability.

We will grow our international research collaborations and reputation for solving regional challenges, partnering with leading institutions and networks, and expanding our cohort of globally engaged higher degree by research (HDR) candidates. We will lead and contribute to international research projects in our priority areas, working with global partners on transition strategies, emerging technologies and community resilience. By co-publishing with international scholars and securing global research funding for regional solutions, we will amplify our impact and visibility. This unique regional perspective brings global relevance.

Federation University is embedded in the communities we serve across regional Victoria. This place-based approach is central to who we are and shapes our priorities, partnerships and the way we deliver education and research. At the same time, it is important that we have a global reach to create opportunities for our students, staff and regions.

Driver 6

Fostering an inclusive and rewarding workplace:

Delivering rewarding careers that make a difference in a workplace that values people.

Our staff drive our success. When we support our people to excel, they deliver world-class teaching, research and support, benefiting learners and communities directly.

We will embed lifelong learning at every level. Staff have access to ongoing development, training in emerging technologies and clear career pathways. Through our Co-op model, we'll offer our students opportunities to build a future with us. We'll enable staff exchanges between partners, our institutes and TAFE, embedding co-design and co-teaching, sharing knowledge and building innovative curriculum. These placements bring real-world experience and fresh insights back to campus, keeping our programs relevant and our people at the forefront of digital literacy and industry practice.

To attract and retain top talent, we offer an inclusive, rewarding workplace that values diversity, collaboration and flexibility. We're modernising systems, investing in campuses and technology, and supporting wellbeing, so our people have the tools and environment to thrive. Recognition and reward programs celebrate excellence and innovation, reinforcing that careers flourish here.

We foster a culture of safety, accountability and awareness to ensure our campuses and services are safe, inclusive and welcoming for all, particularly children and young people.

Federation will be known as a university where great people come and stay – because they can grow, innovate and make a real difference.

Federation is one of the largest employers across our regions and we're committed to being an employer of choice. We invest in our people through professional development, industry and community engagement and competitive conditions and benefits.





Enablers



Deep partnerships with employers and industry

Collaboration is central to the Co-op model. We will leverage and expand our network of partnerships with employers, from local SMEs to large corporates in our technology parks, community organisations and all levels of government. These partnerships will co-design curriculum, provide Co-op placements, inform research needs and co-invest in facilities and initiatives. A partnership mindset in everything we do keeps us responsive and maximises collective impact.



Dynamic learning precincts and technology parks

We will build place-based learning precincts that co-locate education, training, research, industry and community services, making our campuses innovation hubs. By 2040, our campuses and technology parks will be vibrant centres where learners study in real work environments and startups/commercial partners mingle with teachers, academics and researchers. Modern facilities, labs and shared workspaces will stimulate creativity and practical learning. Our Ballarat Tech Park Co-op partnerships with global companies is a model to extend across regions, with demand so high there's a waiting list for tenancy.



Digitally enabled, human-centred solutions

We harness technology to enhance – not replace – the human touch in education and operations. This means state-of-the-art digital platforms for flexible learning, combined with personal support. Data analytics help tailor support to each learner and digital tools streamline tasks to let staff focus on the most meaningful work. Our strategy includes significant investment in IT infrastructure and a user-centric design for all learner and staff digital interactions, ensuring convenience, accessibility and security.



Purpose-driven leadership and governance

As a public sector institution, we are committed to transparent, ethical and accountable governance and values-led decision-making. In an era where many across the globe are questioning the role and value of universities, Federation is committed to leading with integrity, ensuring our decisions reflect the needs of our communities, especially First Peoples', and the long-term interests of regional Victoria. Our governance structures are inclusive and responsive, enabling us to adapt to change while staying true to our values. By embedding strong oversight, clear accountability and a commitment to public service, we build trust with our communities and ensure our strategy is delivered with purpose and impact.



Strong advocacy and policy for regional education and research

We actively engage in policy discussions and advocate for our communities' needs. Federation will continue to be a strong voice for our regions, including First Peoples', seeking supportive settings which lead to positive outcomes such as funding for more regional learner places, incentives for graduates to work in regions and research funding aligned with regional innovation. Effective advocacy in partnership with our regional communities ensures we have government backing and policy frameworks that enable our strategy.



Federation.edu.au
1800 333 864 (1800 FED UNI)
International phone: +61 3 5327 9018

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