

DELIVERING THE UNE STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2035

Connecting Individual Aspirations
to Community Outcomes


Acknowledgment of Country

The University of New England respects and acknowledges that its people, courses and facilities are built on land, and surrounded by a sense of belonging, both ancient and contemporary, of one of the world's oldest living cultures. In doing so, UNE values and respects Indigenous knowledge systems, recognising them as a vital part of Australia's knowledge capital.

We recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of the Aboriginal community and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future.

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**Delivering
the UNE
Strategic Plan
2026-2035**

This document complements the UNE *Strategic Plan 2026-2035*. The Strategic Plan is necessarily succinct to ensure accessibility to a wide audience. This document provides a brief context, repeats the Vision, Purpose and Values, and elaborates on the Foundational Objectives and Community Collaborations. The elaboration is provided for those with a specific interest in one or more of the strategic matters addressed by the Strategic Plan. Further, this document presents an approach to how the Strategic Plan will be delivered and resourced.

The Strategic Plan and the Delivery of the Strategic Plan documents can be read as standalone documents or seen as complementary.



Context Vision Purpose Values

UNE was founded on Country stewarded for millennia by its Traditional Owners. Their knowledge systems, and their growth and transmission across generations, eclipse modern Western university learning systems that have been in place for little more than 500 years. An opportunity exists under a new Strategic Plan to move beyond respectful words. It is a chance to consider how our learning systems might be enhanced and grown through genuine engagement with these enduring intellectual traditions.

UNE was founded in 1938 with a spirit of unconventionality and, as Australia's first regional university, we pioneered many of the features of modern

universities that we take for granted today. We were to do what the existing conventional universities could not, or would not do for communities distant from metropolitan centres.

Our founders were bold and well connected with their community, which paved the way for success. They knew that leadership, civic and intellectual, was needed and that their university had a role in producing future leaders. With 140,000 UNE alumni in 150 countries today, that vision and its implementation are evidenced on a global scale.

Consultation has reinforced that knowledge is core to the existence of a university. The creation of knowledge is key to our Purpose and has been central to our success. The foundation of learning is sharing knowledge and, from our inception, UNE has been a learner-focused institution.

The Strategic Plan was collaboratively developed at a time of great university scrutiny. Government is both driving and responding to this by raising its voice of discontent with leadership, governance and insufficient attention to issues of safety and freedom of expression. It is also increasing regulations to achieve its stated outcomes on behalf of society. Collectively, this is regarded as a social license to operate crisis. Our plan responds to the major issues as we interpret them and sets objectives to ensure we evolve and progress to

meet these and future challenges.

The Strategic Plan has also been developed at a time of extraordinary opportunity, with the advent of functional Artificial Intelligence (AI). As a leader in learning technologies, UNE embraces AI in this plan for learning and discovery, and to support our communities more broadly.

To succeed with a new Strategic Plan, we continue to seek a deeper understanding of our stakeholders and collaborators and their needs. These include our communities, learners, alumni, governments, staff, partners and the corporate entities that comprise UNE's enterprise. We can overcome the significant pressures we face by building our capacity to grow existing partnerships, and to create new relationships, networks and alliances. UNE will lead where necessary and collaborate where most beneficial to all involved.

The Council of UNE stated that a new strategy must meet the following objectives: UNE must be the architect of its own destiny, reinforce its deep regional embeddedness, and bring people together. We have undertaken a period of intensive engagement across stakeholder communities to understand how UNE can best achieve these objectives as it serves its people and places. This engagement made it clear that UNE needed a clear Vision and Purpose for how it will, once again, be unconventional.

Today, consistent with our history, **UNE has the Vision to be an unconventional university that excels at connecting individual aspirations to community outcomes.**

Today, consistent with our Vision and history, the **Purpose of UNE is to support individuals and communities to thrive by creating and sharing knowledge.**

A statement of our Values – Be Kind, Be Bold, Be Accountable, and Be Connected – has been developed over the past two years through staff consultation and a decision-making process. Embedding these values is critical to the implementation of this Strategic Plan. It will underpin the way we work together and the way we collaborate with partners near and far.



Community Collaborations

UNE will initiate Community Collaborations that mark a new, expanded way of working that harks back to our foundations. It was a time when academic staff went out into the communities and “gave them what they needed” in terms of knowledge and its practical use. Today, our communities continue to need UNE, but our approach will be less about delivery and more about collaboration.

Resilient Regional Relationships

The centerpiece of Community Collaborations is a network of Resilient Regional Relationships.¹ UNE will focus its leadership on contributing to regional communities – especially rural communities – by establishing solutions hubs. These solutions will apply to major global issues, including sustainable economies and landscapes, climate change mitigation and adaptation, human mental wellness and disaster management. The UNE-initiated network will provide the knowledge and innovation capital to support research and information sharing, commercial activities, people exchange and education to ensure regional vitality flows from network activities.

Locally, we will focus on the relationships between people and landscapes, and the ways in which technology contributes to this. Internationally, we will distinguish our approach by building strategic relationships (including directly with schools, economies and communities), providing industry-integrated education, research and innovation pathways, and differentiated teaching delivery models. We will bring the lessons learnt from city-rural interactions that have spanned 70 years of operation in the New England and Sydney.

Community Collab Objective 1:

To convene and co-govern 15 regional relationships, each of which carry a focus on at least one UN Sustainable Development Goal, by 2035.

Upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander holistic educational rights

UNE must uphold the right to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, working with elders and communities to better understand their aspirations and the role we can play to support them. We need to decrease systemic barriers, create more culturally safe environments and make available education that serves the purposes of First Nations learners. We will conceptualise, develop and implement co-designed programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational journeys from early childhood to university and employment via learning network partnerships and collaborations.

Community Collab Objective 2:

UNE will demonstrate a new approach to co-supporting education success by deep listening and joint responses to facilitate rightful opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

¹ Resilience is the capacity to absorb shocks and to rebound from them. It can be extended to include the ability to adapt to opportunities and benefit from them.

Live and Work to Learn regional partnerships

People in Australia's rural and regional communities face different challenges to their metropolitan counterparts. UNE was founded by the community for the community. We have enabled regional people to thrive courtesy of their education. Our research has also resulted in significant long-term industry and community benefits.

UNE has not previously taken responsibility for its role in easing systemic pressures in rural communities, notably in aged care, health care, childcare and sport. A lack of human capital prevents regional economies from realising their full potential. UNE will form new types of service-delivery partnerships with the public and private sectors by creating a life "wrap-around" for learners – a new experience for them, our communities and ourselves.

Community Collab Objective 3:

To have 10% of our domestic coursework learners in Live and Work to Learn arrangements by 2035.

Regions of tomorrow

UNE will commit to establishing the New England Northwest as a regional AI education and innovation centre. We will embed ourselves as collaborators within local and regional communities to deliver in-demand outcomes from our research. We will match our capability to community and industry ambitions.

By supporting the wide adoption of AI, UNE aims to make doing business in regional areas more efficient and attractive. We will support our community to become a high productivity hub for regionally based enterprises, by doing what UNE is so good at: using technology to remove the perceived impediments of distance. UNE will be client zero for a connected community and business and will test new ways of operating and new prototypes in-house. This includes developing human and platform capability across the university, then extending this capability internationally as we learn.

Community Collab Objective 4:

To support 100 businesses across the New England Northwest, uplift their productivity with AI, and create 20 new businesses based on AI by 2035.

Renewable Energy Zone alliances

Many rate the global renewable energy transition as the challenge of the 21st century and our major means of mitigating climate change risk. The Australian and NSW governments have declared the New England Renewable Energy Zone (NE REZ) a core component of delivering such mitigation. It is the only zone with a university at its heart, and this presents exceptional opportunities for communities, the government, industries and UNE.

UNE is willing and able to partner in workforce development, research, community support, accommodation provision and new industries. UNE will play an active role in guiding and supporting the community through physical, social and economic change. We will partner with leaders in the NE REZ space to focus on collaborations that bring the greatest community value.

Community Collab Objective 5:

To become a core institution to the success of the NE REZ, indicated by 3 government relationships, 2 industry consortia and 3 new pieces of infrastructure using renewable energy by 2035.







Foundational Excellence

Our stakeholders are seeking significant changes in what we represent and deliver. They demand that universities show they are listening to discontent – and responding. We acknowledge that there are features of how we operate that need fundamental change. UNE's first Vice-Chancellor, Sir Robert Madgwick, declared that UNE students were here to become leaders; they were expected to apply discipline to learning. Achieving Foundational Excellence is a basic requirement of this strategy.

Our Vision, Purpose and Values will guide our Strategic Plan delivery and instill meaning and urgency. In the immediate future, we will be required to transition to a new UNE Operating Model to achieve cultural and financial stability and to deliver foundational services to our regional communities and learners. UNE must maintain and build operational excellence. Meeting our Foundational Principles and quantitative and time-bound Foundational Objectives will enable us to achieve Foundational Excellence.

The centrality of academic freedom

In an era in which the very existence of universities is being questioned, UNE maintains academic freedom as central to institutional excellence. Both the Higher Education Standards Act (2003) and UNE's own policy suite define academic freedom at UNE.² We uphold academic freedom as a shared right and responsibility, exercised within the requirements of governance, quality standards and community accountability. The choices of which courses the university delivers must be made through a rigorous, defensible and transparent process based upon a set of principles and associated rules, agreed by our institution. The investment of strategic funds in research is guided by the needs of our communities and partners, and the strategic priorities of UNE, matched by academic capability and willingness to participate.

Foundational Principle 1:

Academic freedom is core to UNE's existence and meeting our Purpose.

² Higher Education Standards Act (2003) www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A01234/latest/text; UNE Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy policies.une.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=468&version=2; UNE Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Statement policies.une.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=283&version=3

Our learners, their environment and outcomes

UNE must be a safe environment. We must offer learning that meets the needs of students, industry, partners and society. It is imperative that UNE continues to attract more learners but, even more importantly, they must complete their degrees. College leadership culture and the physical and learning infrastructure for distance and on-campus learners must meet changing expectations.

Foundational Principle 2:

UNE must be safe for all learners – physically and psychosocially.

Learner Satisfaction

UNE has a right to be proud of its unparalleled public university track record in overall Student Experience ratings (Good Universities Guide) – five stars for 20 consecutive years. However, underlying scoring has been decreasing in recent years so we must work to maintain and even boost this rating.

To increase the attractiveness of UNE, improve student experiences and retain those learners who commence, we must listen to them. UNE's learners are not dominantly school leavers, and we need to improve our efforts to attract and retain more learners. Current and emerging regulation, combined with new societal expectations, require the university to develop and implement plans for improved learner engagement and supportive cultural environments. Improving our physical infrastructure (see below) includes the needs of learners beyond the classroom – real or virtual.

Learning offerings that meet learner, industry and societal needs

To ensure that UNE has a course portfolio fit for purpose (including our financial sustainability), we have established principles for reform and renewal aimed at meeting the market and strategic needs of our communities. This will reinforce our historical strengths and see UNE take responsibility for its share of deep national discipline excellence. We acknowledge that transitioning our course portfolio into a new, highly performing portfolio is a major undertaking.

Learner retention must improve

UNE ranks last in the sector in terms of learner retention. This is not a mark of academic excellence, and it is imperative that this ranking is remedied under this strategy. To increase retention, UNE must understand deeply what drives learners, e.g., connection and belonging to the institution and one another, and the ways in which our offerings do or do not match their requirements.

Foundational Objective 1:

To improve the experience of learners, irrespective of their mode and locations of learning (remaining in the top three of public universities for Quality of Overall Educational Experience in the QILT SES), by 2030.

Foundational Objective 2:

At least 75% of the course clusters in UNE's active course portfolio will meet all the benchmarks (success, retention, total EFTSL, commencing EFTSL, QILT QOESAT) by 2030.

Foundational Objective 3:

To raise learner retention, recognising the multiple life pressures on our learners, to meet UNE's benchmark university group median by 2035.

World-class research

Australian universities must all meet world-level research across at least half their fields of education. UNE aims to become more broadly active in research.

Foundational Principle 3:

UNE will be renowned for the quality of its research partnerships, which will create greater critical mass and broader research impact.

Across universities and rankings, our research reputation lags. UNE has become too localised in its research strengths. Broader impact is possible by:

- activating more of our research-focused human capital;
- increasing the scale and breadth of our partnerships; and
- including the building of international relationships.

All will be an important focus under this strategy. UNE has unique research infrastructure, particularly for animal-focused research, which needs to be prioritised for implementation. Community Collaboration offers excellent opportunities to develop sophisticated and impactful partnerships. Further, we will track and measure the impact of our research on our own learning offerings.

Foundational Objective 4:

Increase research activity and impact by:

A. Increasing research income (2X 2025 income by 2035) and increasing the load of Higher Degree Research learners (1.5X HDR enrolments by 2030).

B. Activating more of our talent, with all balanced academics research active by 2030.

Staff satisfaction

UNE cannot operate well, let alone transition to a new operating model and optimistic future, unless people can attend work as their true selves, enjoy their work environment, are well and know they deliver meaningful outcomes.

UNE must provide a work environment conducive to safety, enjoyment and productivity. The skill, experience, wellness and morale of our people will always underpin and drive our success. Through embracing diversity and belonging, and appropriate retention, support and progression opportunities, UNE's workforce can continue to be the driving force of our institution. Attention is required across all aspects of accessibility to achieve this objective.

Changes required to improve the work environment for the people of UNE include:

- workload and its management;
- staff skills development;
- the embedding of values into behaviours; and
- a closer productive working relationships between all staff, including those in formal leadership roles.

Foundational Principle 4:

UNE must be a safe, enjoyable and productive work environment for all.

Foundational Objective 5:

To achieve staff satisfaction by unifying our people in a rebalance between authority and collegiality, workloads and resourcing (at least sector benchmark for agreement and performance in Staff Engagement Survey) by 2030.

Governance

The Commonwealth Government has accepted the final report of the Expert Council on University Governance³, which sets expectations for university governance. UNE recognises that an appropriate balance must be struck between the time and resources allocated to governance and the University's other core functions. Today, broader expert and social commentary communicates that the sector has given insufficient attention to governance.

The UNE Council and its academic and management governance committees will continue to progress current reforms and build upon these as government and regulators provide further guidance and instruction. An ongoing important aspect of governance is academic, staff, learner and community voices. UNE has a number of excellent means for listening to these voices and will meet the governance expectations set by the Expert Council on University Governance.

Foundational Principle 5:

UNE will meet the expectations set by the Government in relation to University Governance.³

³ Expert Council on University Governance – Final Report and Principles. (Accessed 17 November 2025) www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/expert-council-university-governance-final-report-and-principles

Operational fitness

UNE is not currently fit enough to meet its operational requirements. Recently (2024 and 2025 surveys), only ~10% of UNE staff rated our operational efficiency as good. Further, the maintenance and replacement of our digital and physical infrastructure have been low priorities for many years, creating significant infrastructure debt. Tweaking current systems and operational processes will not suffice. UNE must transition to a new operating model – supported by a formal capital management plan and resourcing allocations – to achieve a step change.

Changing how we operate and what systems we use will support our future ambitions. A much leaner university, with less bureaucracy and fewer people devoting time to processes, will allow us to work more effectively and enjoyably. It is proposed that we build (or buy) as much as we can because fixing what we have is likely an impossible target to achieve in any reasonable timeframe. The intelligent and high capability implementation of AI will be key. A bold, clearly articulated and well-communicated framework and plan for (digital) systems and data is a priority.

Foundational Principle 6:

UNE can only provide an enjoyable work environment and deliver the community and learner needs articulated in this Strategic Plan with a significantly improved Operating Model.

Foundational Objective 6:

We will improve our operational fitness (as measured through staff experience of efficiency in the Staff Engagement Survey) to the sector benchmark by 2030.

Financial sustainability

For UNE to take charge of its own future, effective financial stewardship needs to underpin our approach to decision-making and investment. We will generate a surplus across UNE and its controlled entities for reinvestment in our Purpose (creating and sharing knowledge) and Vision (delivering individual aspirations and community outcomes). We will critically assess our investment in time, assets and resources to ensure we are putting to best use efficiencies gained through the deployment of technology. Financial sustainability is an outcome of good strategy and its implementation, not an objective *per se*.

This surplus will be reinvested in necessary capital, courses requiring support beyond their earnings, research activities and student experiences, including improving our college physical infrastructure, academic and extracurricular activities.

Foundational Principle 7:

Financial sustainability is an outcome of a well-executed strategy rather than an objective in its own right.

Foundational Objective 7:

We will meet our costs and deliver a year-on-year surplus of 10% of revenue.

Delivery approach

In setting out the approach for delivering our Strategic Plan, it is important to reflect on the zeitgeist of 2025 in terms of why Australia has and needs universities. Delivery of our plan must deal with the following four key matters.

1. Connecting the realisation of individual aspirations to community outcomes. We achieve these objectives through two integrated pathways: (1) **Foundational Objectives** that directly support individual learner and staff success, and (2) **Community Collaborations** structured by a set of Connecting Principles. Each Community Collaboration has immediate-term (two to three year) “doable” objectives that start us on the pathway to reaching longer-term objectives.

2. Meeting our Foundational Objectives by defining and planning the implementation of a new Operating Model. This requires an overall approach, starting with Principles, immediate-term Delivery Objectives and clear, time-bound milestones along pathways to achieving each of the Foundational Objectives.

3. Adhering to our Foundational Principles is essential for embedding cultural change, our institutional values and improved governance across UNE.

4. Resourcing our Strategic Plan. Public investment in higher education may be increasing in real terms, but its allocation through pseudo-market dynamics means that UNE cannot deliver this Strategic Plan on teaching revenue and research block grants alone. UNE must look to financial security through other income streams while remaining anchored to its core purpose: delivering public goods through teaching, research and community engagement. A commercial focus enables us to deliver increased public benefit.

There are significant advantages to Australian (and global) society of a high rate of tertiary education, underpinned by a powerful research and innovation system. In delivering the goals of our Strategic Plan, we will navigate a course between the commercial mindset required to steward resources in an environment of persistent under-resourcing and a less managerial approach.

Our Vision and Purpose are civic in outlook and specify the recipients of outcomes. They focus on individuals and communities, not institutional self-interest, and maintain our commitment to staff wellbeing. Our response to resourcing challenges is to become a university that is far more integrated into regional economies and better able to use its assets to deliver a financial margin that can be directed towards meeting its Purpose.

Connecting the realisation of individual aspirations to community outcomes

Principles for Connection

Our Principles for Connection are designed to make the delivery of the high-level objectives for each Community Collaboration tractable. Again, we do not want the Community Collaborations to become monolithic programs or initiatives.

These principles shift us from service provider to active relationship partner with shared responsibilities for outcomes. They also enable sub-level and short-term objectives to lay the groundwork for how we will deliver longer-term objectives. Dedicated leadership and broad staff involvement will be required to achieve the following ambitions.

1. **Connecting learner and alumni lives into education – sharing responsibility for the success of our learners by addressing life challenges in a meaningful and tangible way.**

Outcome we seek:

education and partnering by design to support the achievement of aspirations rapidly and effectively.

2. **Connecting technology and discovery into ways of learning – co-creating knowledge technology (with an emphasis on AI) learning and discovery experiences with our communities.**

Outcome we seek:

to realise the benefits of knowledge technologies by centring human interactions in learning and bringing research methods to that synergy.

3. **Upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights to, in and through education – moving from consultation to accountability for addressing the barriers to access and participation.**

Outcome we seek:

to move beyond only offering educational opportunity.

4. **UNE connecting into regional economies – becoming an integral partner in driving regional prosperity nationally and internationally.**

Outcome we seek:

UNE taking greater responsibility to deliver commercial services with tangible outcomes through long-term joint relationships for mutual benefit.

5. **Connecting research capability to deep partnering – shifting from isolated research to relationships and collaborative problem-solving.**

Outcome we seek:

deep partnering, where true understanding and research skill combine to deliver innovative results and otherwise unreachable successes.

Monitoring the delivery of Community Collaborations

Our Community Collaboration objectives and stakeholder emphases.

Connecting learner and alumni lives into education

Outcome:

Education and partnering by design: supporting the achievement of aspirations rapidly and effectively

First “doable” deliverables: 2026-27

2030 objectives

<p>Two partnerships to support 50 students in place</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners/Alumni• Communities• Entities	<p>100 new learners participating in AI Uni Ready</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff• Learners/Alumni	<p>Time, money and expertise alumni programs established and communicated to alumni. First \$2m secured in support of non-scholarship activities; 20 mentors in place</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alumni/Learners• Communities	<p>10% of our learners will be embedded in regional accommodation and communities in their field of study</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners/Alumni• Communities• Entities	<p>1,000 new learners who did not think Higher Education was for them</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff• Learners/Alumni	<p>10% of alumni engaged and contributing resources to UNE</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alumni/Learners• Communities
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Connecting technology and discovery into ways of learning

Outcome:

The human-technology relationship: to realise the benefits of learning technologies by centring human interactions in learning and to bring research methods to that synergy

First “doable” deliverables: 2026-27

2030 objectives

<p>Short courses supporting the use of AI and Madgwick available to 500 people</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff• Learners/Alumni	<p>Uni Ready AI courses and two-for award AI-focused degree</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff• Learners/Alumni	<p>20 businesses involved in UNE AI partnerships</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partners,• Learners/Alumni• Communities	<p>5,000 people with AI experiences and skills from their learning with UNE</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff• Learners/Alumni	<p>20% of UNE for-award courses will include AI experiences</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff• Learners/Alumni	<p>1,000 people in businesses across the NENW with UNE AI learned skills</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partners,• Learners/Alumni• Communities
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Monitoring the delivery of Community Collaborations

Our Community Collaboration objectives and stakeholder emphases.

Connecting UNE to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Outcome:

Taking co-accountability: upholding rights to, in and through education

First “doable” deliverables: 2026-27

2030 objectives

<p>Memorandum of Understanding with both the NSW Department of Education and Aboriginal Education Consultative Bodies to establish a supporting role for UNE</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners/Alumni• Government	<p>Launch UNE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumni chapter and host inaugural UNE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumni event</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners/Alumni• Staff	<p>Two community-designed initiatives</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners/Alumni• Staff	<p>Continue to grow the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school leavers and community members applying for university</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners/Alumni• Government	<p>Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumni network and mentoring system</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners/Alumni• Staff	<p>Program of community-informed and designed initiatives</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners/Alumni• Staff
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UNE connecting into regional economies

Outcome:

UNE taking more responsibility: delivering commercial services with tangible outcomes through long-term relationships for mutual benefit

First “doable” deliverables: 2026-27

2030 objectives

<p>Two partnerships (or new facilities) outside Armidale in health care, daycare or sport</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners/Alumni • Government 	<p>Systems established for pedagogical support; initial philanthropic support secured (\$1m)</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entities • Staff • Communities • Learners/Alumni 	<p>Relationship basis established with four schools across three cities; international student numbers increased five per cent for both online and in-country</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners/Alumni • Communities 	<p>20 partnerships established across the New England North West in aged care, health care or early childhood education, for delivering services and establishing learner opportunities</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners/Alumni • Government 	<p>1,000 community members receiving services from UNE Life by 2030</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entities • Staff • Communities • Learners/Alumni 	<p>30 international students from 30 regions/ cities in 2030</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners/Alumni • Communities
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Monitoring the delivery of Community Collaborations

Our Community Collaboration objectives and stakeholder emphases.

Connecting research capability to deep partnering

Outcome:

Deep partnering, where true understanding and research skill combine to deliver innovative results and otherwise unreachable successes

First “doable” deliverables: 2026-27

2030 objectives

<p>Indicator mechanism established by which research into learning is measured</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communities• Partners• Staff• Learners/Alumni	<p>Research Enterprise & Engagement Plan initiatives in place for meeting 2030 objective</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partners• Learners/Alumni	<p>Framework for Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) alliances established and four partnerships in process or signed</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government• Communities• Partners	<p>By 2030, one-third of the research output from UNE over the previous five years demonstrably contributes to learning</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communities• Partners• Staff• Learners/Alumni	<p>Half or (expanded) research outputs from delivery of Community Collaborations and 20% of publications include partners</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partners• Learners/Alumni	<p>At least three REZ alliances will be in place by 2030, with a minimum aggregate value of \$50m partner funding committed</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government• Communities• Partners
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The association between Community Collaborations and Principles for Connection.

Principle for Connection	Community Collaboration				
	Resilient Regional Relationships	Upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights to education	Live and Work to Learn regional partnerships	Regions of tomorrow	Renewable Energy Zone alliances
Learner and alumni lives into education	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
Technology and discovery into ways of learning	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	
Upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights to, in and through education	✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional economies	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Research capability to deep partnering	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓

Delivering our Foundational Objectives

Defining our Operating Model

UNE's Operating Model is defined as the alignment of our people, learning offerings, processes, technologies and controlled entities into a high quality, effective and efficient (lean) knowledge creation and sharing delivery ecosystem. It integrates our physical campuses and digital platforms. It defines how we operate commercial services that generate revenue and deliver community benefits that can be reinvested in teaching, learners, research and increased community impact.

Dedicated leadership and broad staff involvement will be required to deliver a new Operating Model. By finding our greatest inefficiencies and targeting those most amenable for improvement, UNE will progressively shift time and resources to the more recalcitrant and expensive processes. Our Foundational Objectives and doable initial priorities are outlined in the table below.

Delivering our Foundational Objectives.

Ultimate goal	"Doable" deliverables: 2026-27
Our learners, their environment and outcomes	
We will improve the learner experience and satisfaction, irrespective of their mode and locations of learning (to remain in the top three of public universities for Quality of Overall Educational Experience in the QILT SES) by 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More meaningful learner participation in the design of study that meet their needs
We will offer learning that meets learner, industry and society's needs: at least 75% of the course clusters in UNE's active course portfolio will meet all the benchmarks (success, retention, total EFTSL, commencing EFTSL, QOESAT) by 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed methodology and process 2026 Q1 • Process for retirement of lowest performing courses 2026 • Process for creation of new offerings and first new offering 2026
We will raise learner retention, recognising the multiple life pressures on our learners, to meet the benchmark university group median by 2035	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early learner unit and course engagement initiatives implemented from 2026 • Improve connection between academics who deliver units and admissions decision-making to reduce early attrition • Invest in college culture change and infrastructure improvements

Ultimate goal	“Doable” deliverables: 2026-27
World-class research	
We will increase research activity and impact by increasing research income (2x by 2035) and increasing the load of Higher Degree Research learners (1.5x by 2030)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● See REZ partnerships ● Fund next phase of Manna Institute 2026
We will increase research activity and impact by activating more of our talent (all balanced academics research active by 2030)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formal transparent assessment of current research activity status and individual time allocation action plans 2026 ● Professional development opportunities clearly documented
Staff satisfaction	
We will improve staff satisfaction by unifying our people to rebalance authority and collegiality, workloads and resourcing (at least sector benchmark for agreement across wellbeing, employee engagement and performance in Staff Engagement Survey) by 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue transparent communication of UNE status, and consultation on all major processes and changes ● Documentation and communication of genuine staff consultation and co-design of solutions in local area decision-making from 2026 ● Improved processes and communication of academic governance effectiveness (impacts from each level of hierarchy – local to Council) to all staff
Operational fitness	
We will improve our operational fitness (as measured through staff experience of efficiency in Staff Engagement Survey) to the sector benchmark by 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaboratively design and develop a new Operating Model for UNE ● Document “buy or build, not fix” processes 2026
Financial sustainability	
We will meet our costs and deliver a year-on-year surplus of 10% of revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clear communication of financial position and responsibilities for all levels and areas to contribute to financial objectives ● Clear communication of investments and margins from non-teaching and research activities and their deployment ● All research contracts will include a minimum five per cent loading for researcher salaries

Resourcing our Strategic Plan

Learner load

The major source of revenue for UNE is learner load. In 2024, our modelling indicated that a minimum load of 12,500 EFTSL was required to meet our operational costs. Since that time, these costs have increased (mainly by meeting Enterprise Agreement salary increases). Consequently, we now need a minimum of 12,700 EFTSL to meet operational costs (not total costs).

The 2030 forecast is produced by first estimating 2026 intake EFTSL using a Random Forest machine-learning model, trained on 12 years of monthly point-in-time student data, together with monthly employment indicators (where available). For years beyond 2026, outer-year intake is projected by applying the 2025–2026 intake growth rate, with the growth capped at about three per cent to prevent unrealistic fluctuations. Forecasts for continuing EFTSL (which includes both non-intake commencing periods within the first year and all subsequent-year students) are generated using cohort-based historic retention rates, applied to the appropriate student groups.

Student load projections 2030.

	2025	Bottom-up forecast 2030	2030 strategic stretch target
Domestic	9,809	12,534	13,071
International	614	1,221	1,273
Total	10,423	13,755	14,344

Across Armidale, Tamworth and Sydney, UNE expects to grow a diverse international student cohort. We intend this to be a modest part of our future total cohort (up to 15% head count) and to provide an excellent experience for those from afar, as well as the Australian domestic learners with whom they will live and learn.

If these forecasts are met, UNE will continue to balance its operational ledger (the balance was first achieved in 2026) even as costs continue to escalate into the future. However, a balanced operating ledger is not sufficient to deliver the overall financial target and therefore meet the reinvestment required in the Strategic Plan to create a thriving UNE into the future.

Research income

Research income is the fuel of discovery. Our objective to increase research income is a vehicle for increasing our research activity and consequent impact in terms of research reputation, partnerships and measurable economic activity.

UNE will have to be far more oriented towards the needs of partners. Today, there are well established ways of working with businesses and other institutions to ensure that both research and partner aims are met. UNE will need to develop greater negotiation and value-setting arrangements in research contracts. UNE will develop these partnerships, with financial transactions and relationships locally, national and across our regional relationships. Generally, universities consider research income to be neutral in terms of financial sustainability, i.e., what is earned is spent. It is often overlooked that teaching is little different. However, it can be different with research. If research contracts are negotiated to include a partner contribution to staff salary costs, then financial flexibility can be delivered to the institution, and Schools can achieve a meaningful amount of discretionary expenditure. Under this Strategic Plan, we aim to deliver a minimum of five per cent of research staff salary in research contracts. Of course, this will not be possible with government competitive grants.

An unconventional suite of approaches to additional revenue

Regardless of the rhetoric of the day, UNE must not be solely reliant on teaching revenue and government research block grants to thrive. Individual options are not by themselves unconventional. It is the combined deployment of all possibilities and a clear, transparent process for the allocation of margins that will result in UNE meeting its broad community, learner and staff objectives, allowing us to better support teaching and research.

In terms of our Vision and Community Collaborations, the shift from observer to partner, from provider to co-creator, was shaped by comprehensive consultation. This consultation asked stakeholders what UNE should do that others typically do not. Their answers were clear. If UNE considers itself to be a part of its region, economy and community, the opportunities for resourcing our Vision and Purpose are significantly broader than the constrained scope of learner load and research income.

At UNE, our objective is to bring broad benefits to our communities. Financial sustainability is an outcome not a key driver. We deliver this by mobilising our history, and reimagining some of our current operations, assets and capabilities, as set out below.

- **Physical assets and farms:** Developing our physical and land assets, including our farms, residential colleges and residences, to embrace infrastructure leasing for multiple uses, partnerships and commercial activities.

- **Industry partnerships:** Growing industry partnerships across multiple domains beyond our traditional agriculture and livestock activities, e.g., health, technology and the arts.
- **Philanthropy:** Further expanding the philanthropic support we receive. Today, UNE has a philanthropic corpus built on generous gifts of scholarships for individual students. Most universities have created opportunities for gifts of time, expertise and resources that support core activities and initiatives. The revitalisation of the UNE Foundation positions us for success in attracting and managing a greater philanthropic corpus.
- **International relationships:** While other universities focus on transacting internationally for undergraduate students, UNE will develop relationships whereby student and knowledge exchanges are complemented by commercial and cultural growth.
- **Private and corporate education and training:** UNE has a long history of taking education into its communities well beyond the awarding of degrees. There are significant opportunities for expansion. UNE Partnerships has been operating for nearly 40 years as a supplier of education outside the scope of the UNE parent. In an era that demands harmonisation between the VET and university sectors, UNE has a significant head start. We intend to expand this to the global private education sector.

- **Commercial services:** UNE currently has capabilities in many of the commercial service areas that our communities lack. There is significant capacity for further development across our region – and beyond. UNE Life currently provides services to the UNE parent and community across a range of relevant areas, including health care, events, food, retail and sport. We have already begun positioning UNE to expand these commercial service activities in the wider economy.
- **Commercialisation:** UNE has a long and successful track record in research and education commercialisation e.g., the Agricultural Business Research Institute (ABRI). The Smart Region Incubator (SRI), a community innovation partnership, represents a vehicle for revitalising and expanding commercialisation and business creation across our region and internationally. We are exploring the creation of investment funds for starting new businesses.

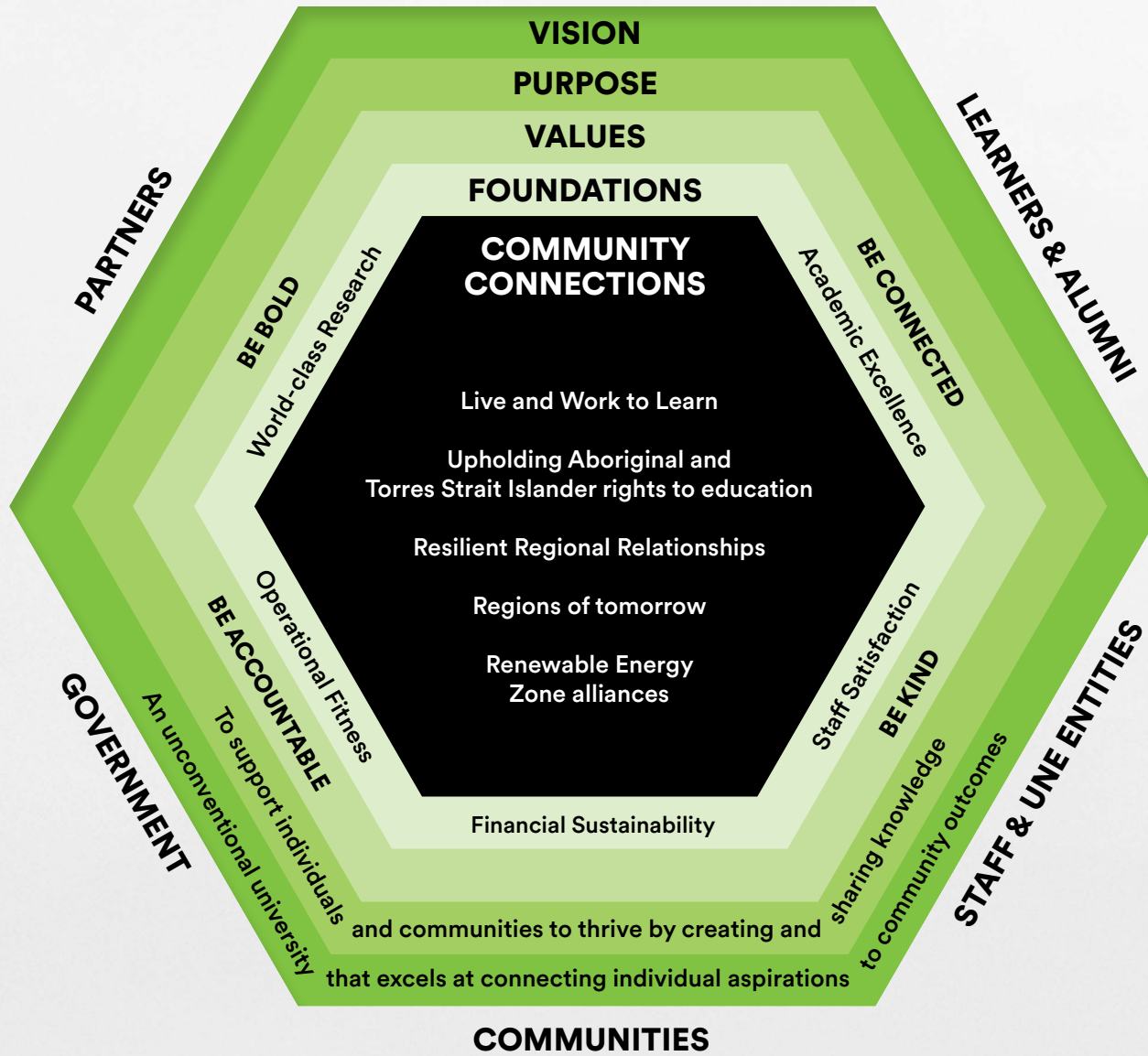
Our approach to financial management

Given this degree of sophistication, UNE will develop a new accounting and internal operational finance approach to facilitate success. For our University to thrive under this Operating Model, margins earned in one activity will be transferred to support others where there is little or no margin. The key principles for success will be that the flows of funds are transparent to all and that they abide by a set of agreed principles. We have already begun our journey towards greater financial literacy across UNE, and this will need to increase over time as our operations succeed.

How our unconventional future meets your needs

Are we meeting the needs of our stakeholders?

As outlined in the Strategic Plan 2026-2035, we ask our stakeholders: does this plan and its delivery demonstrate that UNE has listened to your needs and reflected them in our planning? Of course, not all desires can be met and those that are represented cannot all take the same level of precedence. The plan's execution should be a dynamic and evolving process that continues to point us towards more effective ways of meeting our Vision while staying true to our Purpose. Our Foundational Objectives and Principles address learners and staff specifically. Table 1 links our 2030 Community Collaboration Objectives with various stakeholders.



This Strategic Plan was developed through extensive consultation with staff, students, communities and stakeholders throughout 2024-2025. It reflects our collective commitment to UNE's unconventional outlook and our shared responsibility for the communities we serve.

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