



A Vision Statement for a South Australian *university for the future*

March 2023



University of
South Australia



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

A message from the Vice-Chancellors

We believe that a unique opportunity now exists to transform the higher education landscape in South Australia.

In the context of the State Government's higher education policy, including a proposed merger commission, and following deep deliberation by our respective Councils, through an historic agreement and a [Statement of Cooperation with State and Federal governments](#), our two universities have committed to explore how their combination might bring together the best of our long and proud histories with an ambitious vision for enhanced future impact.

We know that our respective experiences, traditions and histories have served us exceptionally well as great South Australian institutions.

However, we believe that this is a once in a generation opportunity to re-imagine and co-create a combined university which can be a true leader in Australia and admired globally for its outstanding impact.

We are now actively exploring the creation of an outstanding comprehensive university that tackles global issues with local importance. A university that, through its actions, mission and intent, will work to address social inequity and to underpin our future prosperity.

We are currently undertaking due diligence as part of a broader feasibility assessment to support consideration of that co-created possible future by our decision-making Councils later this year.

The insights we have gathered to date speak to the great potential of this opportunity.

We know that the success of a new university will be wholly contingent on the commitment, expertise and engagement of those who form its community.



So, we would really appreciate hearing from you.

This joint aspirational Vision Statement sets out shared ambitions and clear aspirations for the new university we believe our two organisations have the opportunity to create.

Our vision is that this university for the future will be the place for outstanding educators, researchers, thinkers, innovators and entrepreneurs, and that its graduates will be among the most sought-after in the world.

We want our new for-purpose university to put higher education qualifications in reach of students from all walks of life, breaking the cycle of inequality. Students everywhere would be drawn to the university because of its outstanding student experience, flexible study options and job pathways.

We want it to deliver Australia's most contemporary, industry-informed curriculum, leading to jobs in areas of future demand and partnering with employers and end-users to produce outstanding graduates.

We want the university to be of appropriate scale and culture so that it can readily increase investment in skills and knowledge while remaining nimble to move with the rapid pace of change.

We want our future-making and partnered world-class research of scale and focus to transform our State's economy and contribute to solving global challenges.

Above all else, we want our State to be a place where education and innovation create and underpin a more cohesive and prosperous society. It is our strongest hope that we can achieve that by working together.

We are seeking your feedback to amplify this vision and enable us to present the best possible outcome for the future.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Professor Peter B. Høj AC FAA FTSE

Vice-Chancellor and President
The University of Adelaide

Professor David G. Lloyd C Chem FRSC FTSE

Vice-Chancellor and President
University of South Australia



The national higher education context

The Australian Government has committed to establishing an Australian Universities Accord to drive reform in Australia's higher education system.

The [Accord](#) will be informed by a comprehensive expert review which, in broad terms, seeks to establish how Australia's higher education system can best meet the current and future needs of the nation.

The Accord process will include an examination of those structural and mission adjustments which may be necessary to sustain the Australian higher education system over the next three decades – including the potential for institutional amalgamation. At this point in time, we believe the goals and ambitions articulated for the university for the future would be well aligned with the outcomes of the Accord process.

The changing context of higher education in South Australia

Collectively, the three South Australian public universities educate over 65,000 full-time equivalent students each year, including over 10,000 from low SES backgrounds and 20,000 from overseas.

Our universities undertake research that addresses South Australia's priorities including the creation and attraction of new enterprises and associated jobs and deliver a future workforce including the State's doctors, nurses, dentists, engineers, scientists, teachers, academics, economists, lawyers, health workers, agriculturists, anthropologists, veterinarians, agronomists, and many other professionals.

It is forecast that nine in 10 jobs of the future will require post-school qualifications. At least 50% of these are expected to require a bachelor's degree or higher.

Building the requisite skills base is critical for our State, particularly when our levels of tertiary education attainment currently lag the national average.

International education is also an important economic driver for our State. It is South Australia's largest service export, valued at \$1.4 billion and supporting 11,800 jobs across South Australia in 2021-22.

Our universities are also drivers and leaders in our State's cultural and social strength through their public engagement and contribution to our intellectual, cultural and civic life.

Notwithstanding the individual strengths of our two universities, our smaller comparative size to interstate institutions means we inherently lack the necessary scale for sustainable investment, an advantage which is increasingly open to many of our counterparts.

If we can attain appropriate scale with increased support from government, we can realise our goal to improve access to higher education, to create a destination for leading research and study and to strengthen the foundations of our community through education.

Put simply, combining the strengths of our two institutions provides an opportunity to achieve more quickly than either university could achieve separately in the longer term.



Our shared vision for the *university for the future*

In considering the combination of our institutions to create a university for the future, our guiding premise was that any future university must be built to be transformative and to have significant impacts for SA, Australia, and globally.

Accordingly, we have envisaged the creation of an institution which, when operating, would satisfy a clear shared Vision Statement. Our university for the future, if manifest, must reflect itself in the following:

Australia's new for-purpose university is a leading contemporary comprehensive university of global standing. We are dedicated to ensuring the prosperity, wellbeing and cohesion of society by addressing educational inequality through our actions and through the success and impact of our students, staff and alumni. Partnered with the communities we serve, we conduct outstanding future-making research of scale and focus.

At a more granular level, the key elements of our shared vision and impact are as follows:

Combined, we believe we can build a university which seizes the opportunity that lies before us.

Both our universities are nationally and globally respected institutions which undertake world-class research and have educated hundreds of thousands to create an outstanding cohort of alumni. We have each emerged from the shock of the pandemic in positions of relative financial and institutional strength. Separately, the future of each of our universities would continue to build incrementally on that strength.

Combining the strengths of our institutions could, in our view, unlock benefits far beyond collaboration and scale, making transformational investments in both teaching and research more feasible than they would be for each institution individually. These investments, once realised, would make the combined university a stronger magnet for domestic and international students, as well as for creative and talented staff – creating a flywheel which would drive a step change compared to where our institutions are separately today.



Our combined institution and its graduates should be ready to shape the future of our State, our nation and the world.

The future university would pride itself on offering Australia's most accessible, contemporary and future-focused teaching and learning experience to both domestic and international students.

We would aim to be ranked top in Australia for student employment outcomes and in the top 5 for student experience.

To achieve this, we would design and deliver a digital, modular, adaptable, and stackable curriculum, creating more flexibility for students than ever before in how they choose to study, and more opportunities for flexible entry and graduation paths.

Combined, we would deliver a comprehensive contemporary curriculum across a range of fields of study for lifelong knowledge seekers and aim for the future university to participate in as many fields of study as we individually do today.

We would develop a particular focus on programs which respond to South Australia's and the nation's skills shortages, and which are connected to industries central to our economic growth.

Our programs would be integrated with industry and create the opportunity for students of all levels and fields to engage with industry, including through placements or internships.

Every student at the university would have an experience of entrepreneurship during their program.

We would teach what we research, embedding key research topics and methodologies into the curriculum.

Every course in our university for the future would have a digital underpinning.

We would have a sophisticated digital delivery capability to enable an enhanced and consistent learning experience for students – regardless of their physical location – and an overall mix of delivery modalities for their educational experience.

We want our online curriculum to be the highest quality in Australia – and we would aim to deliver inclusive online education to more students than any other Australian university.

Combined, we would forever transform the role that Australian universities play in providing equity and access to higher education for all.

Equity and excellence are wholly compatible – knowledge and the capacity for successful learning know no borders, race or class. We would aim for more students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to learn and complete degrees at our new university than at any other higher education institution in Australia.

Through both our physical reach across South Australia, as well as our commitment to innovative online education, we would aim to become one of the nation's top five educators of students in regional and rural areas.



For tens of thousands of years, First Nations Aboriginal people in Australia and in South Australia have come together to teach, create and discover knowledge. Our universities today are wholly committed to reconciliation and addressing generations of injustice, but we believe this is only the beginning. Our future university would work to embed Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and learning across our activities and would aim to become the university of choice for First Nations Peoples across Australia.

Combined, we would aim to be globally recognised as Australia's leading future-making research university.

The university would work across the full value chain of research – from discovery to translation and commercialisation – and across a breadth of domains from science, technology, engineering and maths to the humanities and social sciences. It would achieve recognition for delivering world-class research in areas that are a high priority for the State.

Combined, we would be ranked in the top 1 per cent of universities globally – and would work confidently to be recognised among the world's top 100 universities on an ongoing and sustainable basis.

Our research focus would be multi-disciplinary, partnered and dynamically informed by South Australia's evolving economic and social priorities including:

- defence and national security
- space and advanced technologies
- energy and resources
- food and food security
- health and wellbeing
- emerging and critical technologies
- creative and cultural industries.

We believe that close collaboration with industry, driven by a strong fundamental capability, would secure further investment from government, business and private stakeholders, elevating Category 2-4 research funding in the future.

We would aim for our university to be ranked number one in Australia for industry income in research or for commercialisation outcomes.

We would aim to become the destination of choice for the best global researchers, innovators, thinkers and entrepreneurs in our priority areas, driving in-depth, and the highest quality of, multi-disciplinary research at scale in domains of focus, and to provide appropriate training support, attracting and sustaining leading academics and their teams to the university to drive excellence in research and education.

Our university would deliver leading higher degree by research programs to supply the higher degree qualified researchers across broad discipline areas necessary to drive the development of the State and nation's knowledge-intensive industries, such as hi-tech, defence, health and biomedical science, and maximising the opportunity for translation and spill-over of research into industry.

Combined, the university would become Australia's most connected – partnered with the communities it serves and an engine for innovation and economic development.

As South Australia continues the decades-long shift of its economy towards knowledge-intensive industries, universities will become ever more central to driving economic and equitable growth. There is the potential for the step change made as a university to translate into a step change for our knowledge-intensive industries.

Through the transformational investments that we could make in learning, teaching and research, we would build deeper engagement between the combined university, industry and government to create Australia's most connected university – maximising the translation of every dollar invested for the value of the South Australian community and its economic and social wellbeing.

The university would aim to increase the number of South Australians employed in high-value, high-wage jobs which require a bachelor degree or higher, and to increase the measured economic complexity of the South Australian economy.

The university would encourage commercialisation and entrepreneurship across all sectors and build a highly connected and integrated pipeline of research activities and workforce development from discovery to translation.

Our university would work with Australian and global industries to understand, shape and address the most important questions and challenges facing society.

Importantly, the university would – in its own right – become an economic powerhouse for the State. On day one, the university would be the largest services exporter in South Australia and among the largest exporters overall.

Through driving further attraction of both international students and talented researchers, the university would grow as a magnet for attracting the best and brightest global citizens to the State.

The combined university would present particular opportunities for private sector investment to energise the Adelaide CBD precincts around our campuses through attracting more companies to South Australia and their research and development activities.

Adelaide would become an even more cosmopolitan, globally connected city, benefiting from an increase in international students who bring with them their ideas and culture, creating an attractive, open, vibrant place to live and work. Our broad regional footprint would ensure workforce, diversity, research and innovation needs are met across the State.

Combined, we would be financially sustainable, stronger, and better able to invest.

Detailed projections of the financial outcomes capable of the combined university suggest that the university could generate substantial and sustainable operating surpluses over the medium to longer term, with capacity to support ongoing investment in the university's ambitious strategic priorities.

The shape of our future university

From its first day of operation, which is intended from 1 January 2026, the new university would be one of Australia's largest, most comprehensive and engaged institutions.

The Councils have agreed several key matters including the name of the *university for the future* - Adelaide University.

Additional details are outlined in the Statement of Cooperation.

The future university would be formed on three strategic pillars:

- 1. Teaching and learning
- 2. Research
- 3. Engagement



Our path to a future university

Based on the outcome of their consideration of the feasibility assessment currently underway, the two Councils will decide in mid-2023 whether they should proceed with the next steps towards an amalgamation.

If the universities proceed towards an amalgamation, the subsequent transition would aim to minimise impact and disruption for students, staff and partners while building a new, progressive and innovative new institution.

This would be done collaboratively, transparently and efficiently and with the deep involvement of our communities in co-creating the future institution which can best deliver our shared ambition.

The combined university would ultimately be formed through legislation of the South Australian Parliament. It would also be subject to legal and regulatory approvals.

This would be a significant and complex undertaking, which, while it could make some quick gains, would take years to realise its full potential.

High-level timeline

Dec 2022	Statement of Cooperation signed Business case and feasibility stage commences
Jun 2023	Findings presented to university Councils for decision
Mid-2023	Decision point
Jul 2023	If a decision to combine proceed is taken, and relevant legal and regulatory approvals are obtained, detailed transition planning commences
Jan 2026	Combined university would be stood up

Your opportunity to engage

This Vision Statement from the Vice-Chancellors outlines a shared ambition and goals for a combined university for the future in South Australia.

We (the universities) are inviting our communities to help further shape this vision by answering these key questions:

What should be the priorities for the combined university's mission?

What should success look like and what's required to deliver it?

Where would you prioritise investment for greatest impact?

What challenges and risks do you envisage would need to be overcome?

We ask you to please share your thoughts at:



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

The University of Adelaide

Online: ua.edu.au/futureuni

Email us: futureuni@adelaide.edu.au



University of
South Australia

University of South Australia

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Email us: futureuni@unisa.edu.au

Other opportunities to share views will be promoted to our diverse stakeholder groups.