

## POSTGRADUATE STRATEGY

Australian Catholic University is a public not-for-profit university, open to students and staff of all beliefs. The university aims to be a leading Catholic university globally and has seven campuses in Australia, plus a Rome Campus.

### WHY A POSTGRADUATE STRATEGY?

Initiated by ACU's Provost, Professor Pauline Nugent, the Postgraduate (Coursework) Strategy was established in 2012/3 with the aim of diversifying ACU's student profile and enhancing the postgraduate student experience. Prior to this ACU had traditionally focused on undergraduate courses. As a late entrant into a competitive postgraduate market, there was consensus across the University that a new approach was needed to support our industry partners in meeting their leadership and workforce needs.

### An ACU wide strategy was developed with four objectives:

1. Strengthen and diversify ACU's postgraduate offerings (to attract diversified enrolments)
2. Create a distinctive ACU postgraduate brand
3. Build a stronger postgraduate culture to enhance the student experience.
4. Quality systems, services and facilities to enhance the student experience.

### OUR APPROACH

**Under the leadership of the Provost, the Strategy is underpinned by strong academic expertise, an external lens on market requirements and is guided by ACU's Catholic identity and mission.** Faculties work closely with external domestic and international industry partners to **tailor new offerings to market needs** and to bring the applied and practical approach to ACU offerings that provide rich and relevant learning experiences for postgraduate students. ACU is also extending and deepening its international reach and this Strategy offers a framework to offer greater opportunities to current and prospective students to incorporate global perspectives and activities in the educational experiences.



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**All areas across the university are involved in the planning and delivery of postgraduate student experiences.** This includes a focus on enrolment planning, enquiry handling and conversion, new course and curriculum developments, improving learning and teaching, new career and student services, facility improvements and marketing strategies. Activity owners report on progress each quarter to the ACU wide Strategy Steering Committee, noting success factors and barriers to improvements. In this way **lessons learnt are shared at an early stage and risks and opportunities are acted on quickly.**

A specific **Operations Working Group** has been established to bring together staff directly involved in 'nuts and bolts' processes and contact with postgraduate students, to generate new ideas and improve service quality and coordination.

### OUTCOMES

The Strategy is underpinned by an **Outcomes and Reporting Framework** that details enrolment targets and clear, measurable outcomes that are aligned with ACU's Strategic Plan, goals and reporting cycles.

**Key Result Areas** are linked to the Postgraduate Strategy objectives. Milestones and activities address:

1. **Sustainable** enrolments.
2. **A Focus on Students and Creating Quality Student Experiences** through Learning and Teaching (Learning for Life), improved facilities, and responsive systems and student services.
3. **Partnerships** with key international and domestic institutions and stakeholders support growth through pipeline development.
4. **Marketing** is targeted and contributes to brand recognition.
5. **Individual Faculty offerings** are student/career focused and reflect academic rigour and relevance for industry.

### SUCCESSFUL IMPACT

Implementation has targeted a range of cohesive activities to build sustainable enrolments:

1. **ACU's Mission and Identity** is a central element of the Postgraduate Strategy and underscores our distinctive culture.
2. **New course developments are evidence based** and some are supported through Strategic Funding allocations that provide resources for curriculum

development, enhancing existing courses, the development of digital content, and revised course architecture in line with student needs and careers. **The High Performance Sport Suite** of programs highlights this approach and is now being offered at Notre Dame University (USA).

3. **Greater priority is now on student experiences** including offering internships, virtual classroom models and international experiences that reflect a 'whole-of-student-life-cycle' approach. PG offerings are now delivered at ACU's new Rome Centre in collaboration with The Catholic University of America.
4. **Faculties and ACU Executive Education** work together to address and respond to stakeholders needs through more integrated packages of offerings (professional development through to PhD).
5. **Responding to postgraduate student needs and expectations** with links to broader learning and teaching improvement strategies ('Learning for Life').
6. **Strategic Alignment** with plans, projects and operational objectives to ensure learnings from practice are shared across the organisation and cross-functional teams support change and delivery improvements.

### Some key tips for strategists

- **Strong, senior leadership** – this is critical to support whole of university approaches and linked to Mission.
- **Focus on student experiences** – their needs vary and postgraduate students want to engage and further their careers in different ways.
- **Collaboration is key** – building tangible deliverables with individual units within the University is useful to build a high level strategy and support commitment over time.
- **Strategies are live** – postgraduate needs will change over time so continual refinement is necessary.

### Enquiries

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