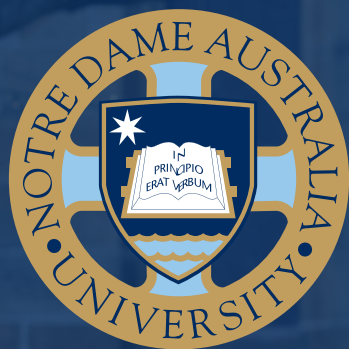
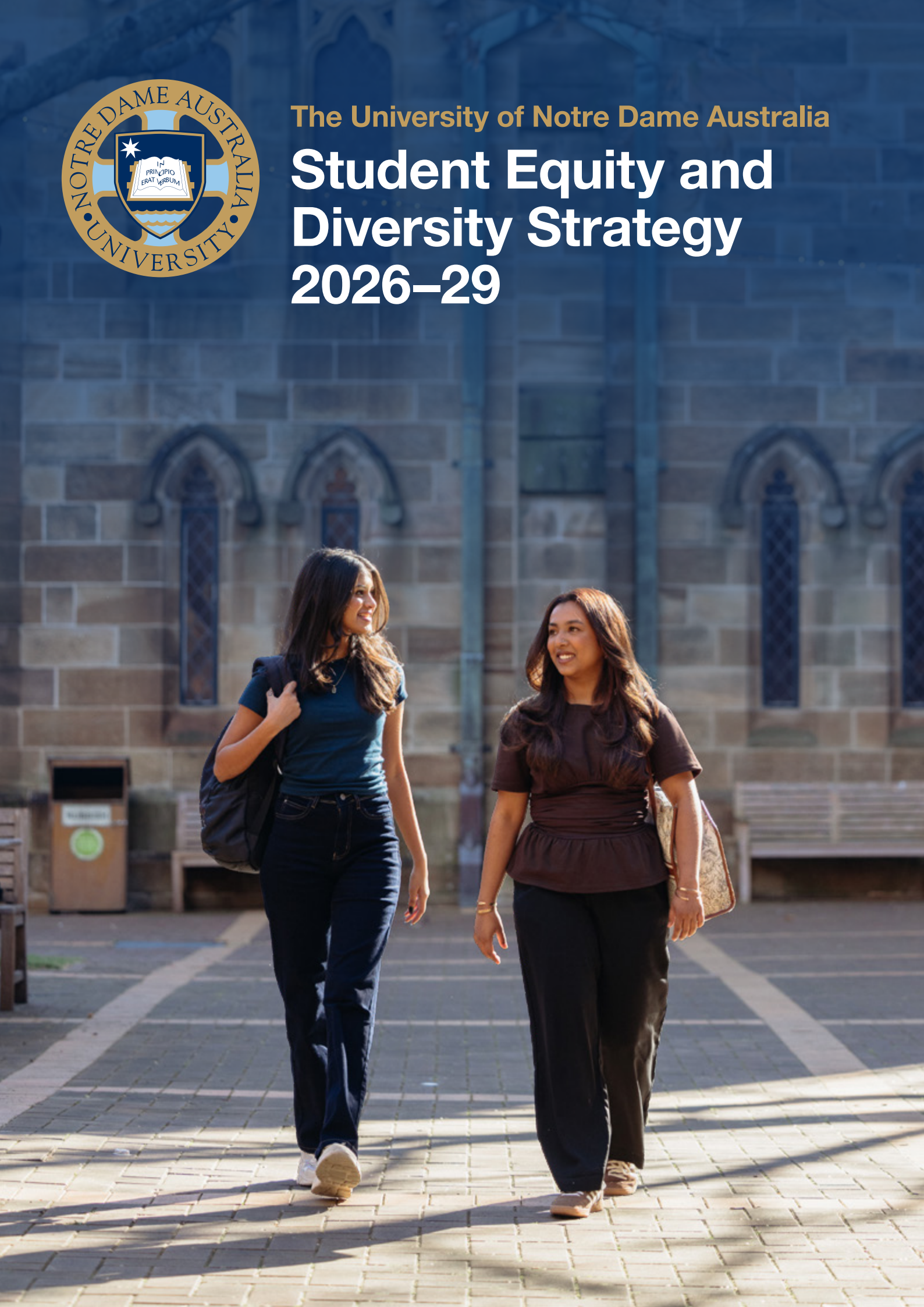




The University of Notre Dame Australia

Student Equity and Diversity Strategy 2026–29





“ Every Catholic university feels responsible to contribute concretely to the progress of the society within which it works: for example it will be capable of searching for ways to make university education accessible to all those who are able to benefit from it, especially the poor or members of minority groups who customarily have been deprived of it.”

– Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Catholic Church, 1990

Acknowledgment of Country

The University of Notre Dame Australia is proud to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of this land upon which our University sits. The University acknowledges that the Fremantle Campus is located on Wadjuk Country, the Broome Campus on Yawuru Country and the Sydney Campus on Gadigal Country.

Message from the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic

I commend to you this inaugural Student Equity and Diversity Strategy. It has been developed collegially through conversations with more than 350 students and staff across our three campuses. I thank all those who participated and shared their hopes and vision for equity and diversity. It is true to say this wide and deep engagement has brought forth multiple perspectives, but all reflect a shared commitment to the University of Notre Dame Australia's identity, values and ethos within the Newman tradition. Equity and diversity are integral to us as a Catholic university and give life to our strategic pillars, especially with respect to Universality, Educating for the Common Good and Integral Human Development.

Equity and diversity are connected but distinct concepts and it is possible to be stronger in one than the other. At Notre Dame, we are on a journey that embraces the expansion of our international and domestic student populations to ensure progress across both. We have some way to go, but the consultation undertaken to develop this Strategy has shown the collective determination to make a difference and extend educational opportunities to those who may have felt university was not for them. In many ways, this inaugural Strategy is also a reaffirmation of Notre Dame's commitment to reconciliation and to working with Aboriginal communities in ways we do so well on our campus in Broome.

Is excellence in learning and teaching only to provide greater opportunities for those who already possess good social, cultural and economic capital? To really open up university success to those who wouldn't traditionally see university as being for them requires conscious and intentionally designed initiatives, which is why this Strategy is so important for Notre Dame. At a national level, we know that the overall participation targets from the *Bradley Review* (2008) were met, but the sub-targets for equity were not. Consequently, we now have the clear signal from the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) that growth for universities will come mostly from increasing the participation of students from equity cohorts.

We should always question how any of our university initiatives or projects impact on equity and diversity. This means that furthering student equity and diversity is a whole-of-university responsibility and informs all our practices – in admissions, pathways, curriculum development, assessment design, internationalisation, applied research, student support, outreach and much more. To achieve this, we need an integrating strategic framework, which is what is now put before you.

My thanks to the Equity and Retention team that have been so diligent and committed to bringing this to fruition.

David Sadler
Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic

“

Equity and diversity are integral to us as a Catholic university and give life to our strategic pillars, especially with respect to Universality, Educating for the Common Good and Integral Human Development.”

The Objects of the University

The objects of the University are –

- (a) the provision of university education, within a context of Catholic faith and values; and
- (b) the provision of an excellent standard of –
 - (i) teaching, scholarship and research;
 - (ii) training for the professions; and
 - (iii) pastoral care for its students.



“ Our commitment to educating for the common good informs *who* we teach so that our student profile is rich and diverse, *what* we teach so that education enables participation and universality, and *how* we teach so that our approaches support both the development of the individual and pursuit of the common good.”

– Notre Dame Strategic Plan 2022–2026

Our vision

Our vision is a university where equitable practice is embedded, diversity is celebrated and students from all backgrounds – particularly those traditionally under-represented in higher education – are welcomed and empowered to flourish.

Our identity and mission as a Catholic university

Equity and diversity are deeply tied to our mission as a Catholic university and the pillars of the University's Strategic Plan 2022–2026. The pillar of Educating for the Common Good foregrounds Notre Dame's role in providing opportunities for all to benefit from higher education, forming our students as active citizens who contribute to their communities. The pillar of Integral Human Development articulates our commitment to helping each of our students flourish as individuals and succeed in ways that are meaningful to them.

Embracing our students' uniqueness

A Notre Dame education considers the whole person across the academic, social, physical, spiritual and wellbeing dimensions. Students are recognised as individuals – “a name, not a number” – and their uniqueness shapes a university culture that expects and embraces diversity as the norm. We envision a university where our teaching, supports and systems respond to students' varied needs, preferences, perspectives, life circumstances and strengths.

Commitment to social justice and reconciliation

At the heart of our Catholic tradition is a profound commitment to social justice. We recognise that educational disadvantage in Australia is both persistent and complex, creating compounding barriers that prevent many from accessing and succeeding in higher education. Guided by the principles of Catholic social teaching – including human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity – our vision is an institution where these barriers are removed, students are equal peers, resources are distributed fairly and all voices are represented.

As an Australian university, we share the national responsibility to Closing the Gap by improving participation and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Through this Strategy, we affirm our role as a university that values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures and perspectives, and actively promotes their inclusion and full participation in the University.

Definitions

Equity means identifying and removing the barriers to accessing, obtaining and thriving in a Notre Dame education to enable all students to participate, particularly those cohorts traditionally under-represented in universities and those who have experienced educational disadvantage.

Diversity reasserts our commitment to including and valuing people from a variety of backgrounds and identities, and to creating a university environment in which all can fully participate, regardless of their ability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or social or economic background.

Equity cohorts refer to students from backgrounds which are traditionally underrepresented in higher education, many of whom come from underserved communities.

Equitable practice is the ongoing process of identifying and actively addressing systemic barriers to students' full participation and success at university through the intentional design and adoption of systems, processes and experiences that account for different starting points, needs and experiences.

Where are we now?

Internal

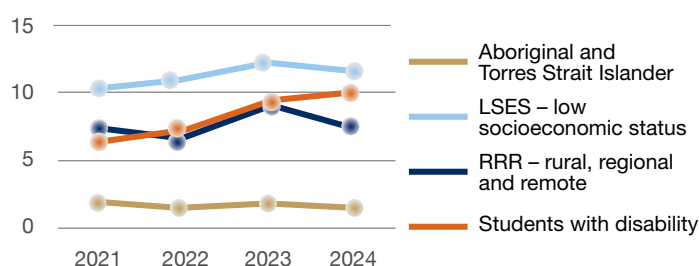
- The University Strategic Plan 2022–2026 outlines our commitment to increasing participation and attainment of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from regional and remote Australia and international students.
- Access and participation rates for domestic equity cohorts at Notre Dame have been stagnant over the past five years (except for a noted increase in students with disability) and fall well below the sector average.*
- Retention and success rates for equity cohorts at Notre Dame are typically lower than non-equity students.
- The number of international students has increased from 2.5% of all students in 2020 to 13% in 2025.
- The University is pursuing institutional growth through the development of new programs and activation of new locations.
- The University has a concerted focus on continuous improvement of student experience and retention to enhance students' success and sense of belonging.
- Outreach programs and pathways aimed at widening participation are growing.
- Staff and students agree on the benefits of a diverse student body but feel there is room to grow to provide welcoming, enabling and accessible education for all students.

* education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/student-data

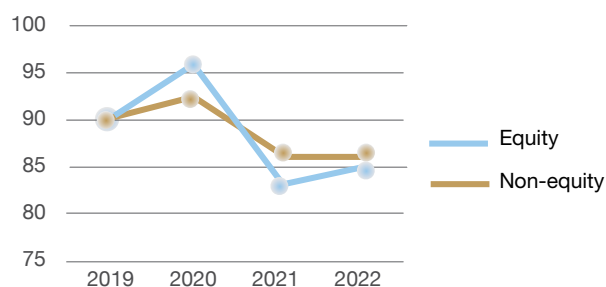
External

- The Australian Universities Accord established a target of 80% of working-age Australians attaining a tertiary qualification by 2030. This can only be achieved by increasing participation in higher education for people from low SES backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, and people from regional, rural and remote Australia.
- The Accord highlights the necessity of high-quality student support and learning and teaching approaches that address the needs of students from equity groups, as critical to achieving this aspiration.
- The national policy landscape – including developments in Managed Growth Funding, Needs Based Funding, FEE-FREE Uni Ready courses, Disability Support Funding and the Commonwealth Prac Payment – provides a favourable environment in which to launch our Student Equity and Diversity Strategy.
- Mission based compacts, negotiated with the Australian Tertiary Education Commission, will capture and monitor our progress against equity performance and completion outcomes.

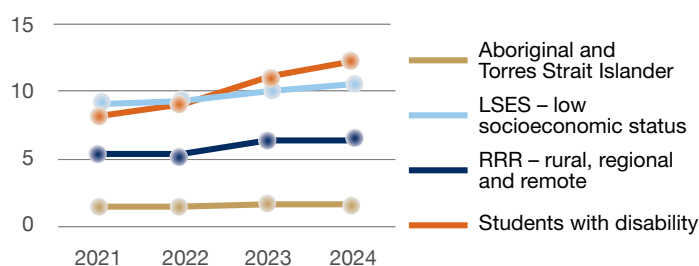
**Access rates
(domestic equity cohorts 2021 – 2024)**



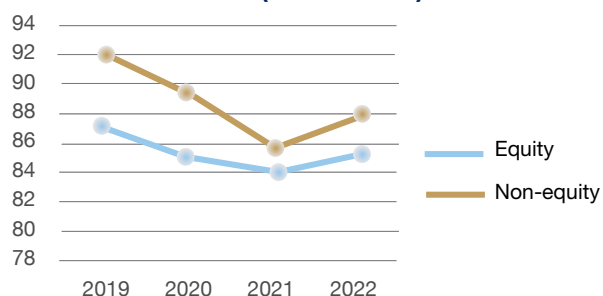
Retention rates (2019 – 2022)



**Participation rates
(domestic equity cohorts 2021 – 2024)**



Success rates (2019 – 2022)







Guiding principles

The guiding principles of the Student Equity and Diversity Strategy will make sure that our way forward aligns with our identity and values and is shaped to provide the best outcomes for our students and their communities.



Dignity of the human person

All people have inherent worth and must be treated with respect, compassion and humility. We will prioritise the flourishing of the whole person throughout their journey with the University.



Student and community centred

Decisions will be guided by what best enhances the student experience to promote belonging, accessibility and inclusion. We will partner with students and communities and adopt a 'nothing about us without us' approach to co-design initiatives that meet real needs.



Strengths-based

Different learning needs and circumstances should never be seen as deficits. We will recognise and build on the strengths of our students and our diverse communities and have high expectations of our staff and students. Excellence is defined by the success of all.



Evidence-informed and accountable

We will use data, evaluation and best practice to continually shape and assess our work. Transparency, honest reflection and accountability will ensure that our commitments are measurable, sustainable and aligned with sector-leading approaches.



Growth through transformation

Equity and diversity are integral to our Catholic identity and values. We will remain open to change, reimagining ways of doing and being, to increase access for non-traditional cohorts and support their belonging, while holding onto our distinctive mission and character.



Focus areas

Targeted action across six strategic focus areas will transform our ways of working and build new initiatives that increase the diversity of the student body and provide equitable opportunities to flourish and succeed.

Outreach, access and pathways

We will expand access by building inclusive pathways and partnerships that actively reach and engage students from under-represented cohorts.

Outreach and access initiatives are vital to building students' awareness, preparedness and confidence to pursue university study. To widen participation and grow the diversity of our student body, we must leverage and cultivate strong, collaborative relationships with our communities and alumni. Outreach programs, admissions processes and pathways should reflect and respond to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of our students, with sensitivity to their contexts. Our distinctive position as a dual-sector university is a strength, offering multiple, flexible pathways into higher education.

Financial inclusion

We will reduce financial barriers by expanding scholarships, grants and support programs that enable students to participate fully in university life.

Financial barriers can significantly affect students' participation and success. The costs of study – including technology, learning resources, travel, childcare, housing and foregone earnings during practicum placements – pose real challenges for students. Building on existing initiatives, we will adopt a coordinated and comprehensive approach to making study at Notre Dame financially viable, empowering our students to manage study, work and life with confidence.

Inclusive learning and teaching

We will strengthen teaching practices, curriculum design and academic procedures to recognise diverse perspectives, remove barriers to participation and improve accessibility for students to thrive academically.

Inclusive pedagogy and curriculum design are key to widening participation and fostering learning environments where all students can thrive. We recognise that students come to their studies with diverse experiences, work and family responsibilities, knowledge and aspirations; our teaching must reflect this reality. Strengths-based approaches, flexible study options, caring and responsive staff, technology-enhanced learning, Universal Design for Learning principles and curricula that value diverse knowledges all help create conditions for success – meeting students where they are in the classroom.

Enabling environments

We will create safe, accessible and culturally responsive spaces – physical and digital – that foster engagement and belonging.

Physical and digital spaces are central to students' sense of belonging, inclusion and safety. Our distinctive campus character and central locations are a strength, but we must continue to enhance our physical and digital environments to better support learning, respond to students' needs and improve accessibility, particularly for students with disability. Visible symbols of diversity and inclusion will strengthen students' sense of belonging. Providing study spaces closer to where our students live will further expand access to a Notre Dame education.

Student belonging and support

We will provide wrap-around support as well as tailored services and programs that respond to the varied needs and experiences of our student community.

Accessible, connected and timely wrap-around supports are central to enabling students' participation, achievement and sense of belonging. Our approach combines targeted and individualised initiatives with comprehensive, university-wide support models delivered both inside and outside the classroom. Reducing barriers to identifying and accessing supports through clear communication and coordinated systems demonstrates our commitment to pastoral care.

Institutional culture and representation

We will build a culture that champions equity and diversity through leadership commitment, representative decision-making and accountable governance.

A Notre Dame education places students at the centre, celebrating everyone's uniqueness. To drive transformational change, equity must be embedded across our academic programs, governance structures, staffing and decision-making processes. By doing so, we will strengthen the visibility and clarity of our commitment to equity and to increasing the diversity of our student body.



How we'll get there

Outreach, access and pathways

1. Build and strengthen partnerships with **low socio-educational and regional schools, TAFE/ VET providers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** communities and organisations, and community organisations, particularly Catholic organisations, to support outreach and access.
2. Deliver **outreach programs** that engage our communities and increase awareness, knowledge and skills to pursue university study.
3. Develop **inclusive admission pathways** that recognise students' experiences and strengths.
4. Expand **enabling, bridging and preparatory programs** to enhance readiness, skills and knowledge for commencing university.
5. Re-establish **school and partner advisory committees** to guide admissions and pathways for under-served communities.
6. Prioritise the **articulation of pathways and VET qualifications to university** study to ensure our students have a seamless transition.
7. Strengthen **equity-led recruitment and marketing**, aligning engagement, activities and conversion practices, to expand access for students from underrepresented communities.

Inclusive learning and teaching

1. Embed **Universal Design for Learning** across curriculum, assessment and pedagogy.
2. Provide **targeted professional development and resources** to build staff confidence and capability in inclusive teaching for a diverse cohort and awareness of support services.
3. Develop and evaluate high-quality **flexible and hybrid delivery modes, student-centred timetabling and automatic extension policies** which enable students to balance study and life.
4. Diversify **assessment methods** to recognise students' varied strengths.
5. Improve **hybrid teaching and use of assistive technology** to enhance digital accessibility.
6. Engage **students as partners, reference groups and sector-benchmarking** to inform teaching and learning practices.
7. Adopt **learnings from contemporary research** into our teaching and learning practices.



Student belonging and support

1. Introduce a **student support model and central Student Hub** to promote a consistently excellent student experience and improve accessibility to information and supports.
2. Use data insights to design and undertake **proactive and targeted student engagement** that meets students' needs and helps them to thrive in their studies.
3. Develop targeted **peer-led support programs** to meet the academic and social needs of under-represented cohorts.
4. Provide an **inclusive first year experience** with strong academic and social integration to facilitate peer connection, academic preparedness and awareness of supports.
5. Provide **targeted support services and programs** to meet our students' academic, social, personal, cultural and financial needs.
6. Serve the whole person through a **network of internal and external support services**.
7. **Improve digital capability** to refer and record students' access to support services, including reducing students' need to re-identify needs/challenges.
8. Facilitate students' engagement with support services through **coordinated, tailored and accessible communications**.





Financial inclusion

1. Develop and implement a **Financial Inclusion Action Plan**.
2. **Expand scholarships, grants and emergency financial supports** through mission-aligned funding partners.
3. Improve student access to scholarships through **automatic allocation** aligned with student need.
4. Expand **accessible work integrated learning and employability-related activities**, including virtual placements, digital badging, volunteering and student mobility offerings.
5. Reduce placement poverty through the implementation of financial and non-financial interventions.
6. Strengthen **financial literacy** and **provide financial counselling supports**.
7. Implement **targeted initiatives** to reduce costs of university study and enable full participation across all aspects of university life.

Enabling environments

1. When undertaking **development or major refurbishment of University buildings**, include accessibility consideration in the design process and, where practicable and reasonable, implement accessibility improvements to ease physical access to teaching, learning and administrative spaces.
2. Create **safe, visible and inclusive spaces** to meet students' needs and enhance their sense of belonging.
3. Reflect Indigenous cultures and languages through **wayfinding, art and flags**.
4. Improve **digital accessibility** of the University's website, learning platforms, resources and marketing materials against best-practice guidelines.
5. Develop regional and remote, outer-suburban and digital study centres, including engaging with Regional and Suburban University Study Hubs, to enhance access to study resources, academic and pastoral support for students.
6. Co-design **learning space principles** with students and staff to ensure inclusivity in future builds.



Institutional culture and representation

1. Publish the **University's definitions and commitment** to equity and diversity, integrating with anti-discrimination measures.
2. Embed **equity targets** into the University's enrolment plan.
3. Enhance our **knowledge and understanding of students' identities and learning journeys** to inform proactive engagement and evaluation.
4. Develop and implement the University's **Reconciliation Action Plan, Disability Inclusion Action Plan** and **Gender Equality Action Plan** with associated policies, training and reporting.
5. Continue and expand uptake of **cultural awareness training** and recommend **disability confidence training** be mandatory for all staff and students.
6. Strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and self-determination by resourcing an **Elders in Residence** program and promote **the role of First Nations leadership** in policies, programs, funding and decision-making that affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.
7. Implement the **Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme** for students and staff.
8. Ensure **authentic representation** of students from diverse backgrounds and under-represented cohorts in marketing, student leadership and curricula.
9. Embed **equity impact analysis** in all policies and new initiatives.

Towards 2029 – success measures and evaluation

	Indicators for monitoring progress	As at 2025 [*]	Target 2027	Target 2029
Outreach, access and pathways 	Increase in access rates for students from low SES backgrounds, Indigenous students and students studying in regional and remote Australia, and maintain upward trajectory in students with disability.	LSES [†] : 11.75% Indigenous: 1.57% Disability: 10.28% RRR: 7.52% NESB: 1.11%	LSES: 12.5% Indigenous: 1.7% Disability: 11% RRR: 8% NESB: 1.5%	LSES: 17% Indigenous: 2.5% Disability: 13.5% RRR: 12.5% NESB: 4%
	Increase in participation and completion (headcount) of enabling, bridging and preparatory programs.	Participation: 651 Completion: 254	Participation: 730 Completion: 440	Participation: 845 Completion: 470
	Improved rates of conversion from VET and pathway programs to university study.	VET: baseline to be established Pathways: 49%	VET: +3% Pathways: 52%	VET: +5% Pathways: 60%
Inclusive learning and teaching 	Increase in enrolment numbers for equity cohorts (undergraduate).	LSES: 1159 Indigenous: 102 Disability: 1159 RRR: 600	LSES: 12.5% Indigenous: 104 Disability: 1275 RRR: 695	
	Reduced gap in success rates between equity and non-equity cohorts and domestic students and international students whilst continuing to grow participation.	Non-equity: 90.08% LSES: 88.14% Indigenous: 77.36% Disability: 87.38% Regional: 93.44% Remote: 90.45% Domestic: 92.2% International: 90.8%	- LSES: 89% Indigenous: 79% Disability: 89% Regional: 94% Remote: 91% - International: 93%	Achieve 85%+ success rate across all under-represented groups. Achieve 82% success rate for Indigenous students.
	Reduced gap in retention rates between equity and non-equity cohorts whilst continuing to grow participation.	Non-equity: 83.45% LSES: 78.26% Indigenous: 72.22% Disability: 77.06% Regional: 75.58% Remote: 79.55%	- LSES: 80% Indigenous: 75% Disability: 79% Regional: 78% Remote: 80%	- LSES: 80%+ Indigenous: 79% Disability: 80%+ RRR: 75%+ Achieve 79% retention rate for Indigenous students.

* Equity access, participation, success and attainment data is from 2024, Department of Education. Retention data is from 2023 (note a one-year lag is typical). QILT data is from the 2024 Student Experience Survey, Quality Indicators of Learning & Teaching.

[†] First Address Low SES by SA1

LSES: Low socioeconomic status RRR: Regional, rural and remote NESB: Non-English speaking background

(Target 2029 to be further developed in line with University strategic planning).

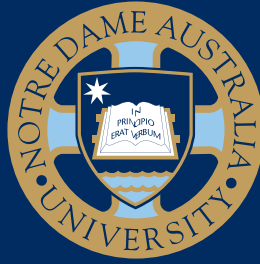


	Indicators for monitoring progress	As at 2025*	Target 2027	Target 2029
Student belonging and support 	Increase in 'Student Support' rating in the QILT Student Experience Survey.	56.4%	57%	65%
	Increase in 'Sense of Belonging' rating in the QILT Student Experience Survey.	48.3%	50%	52%
	Maintain 'Peer Engagement' rating over national average in the QILT Student Experience Survey.	70.9%	72.2%	74%
	Improvements in Personal Wellbeing Index in the QILT Student Experience Survey.	Undergraduate: 73.8% Postgraduate: 76.4% (2023)	Undergraduate: 75% Postgraduate: 77%	80%
Financial inclusion 	Increase total equity scholarships/grants and funds distributed.	\$952,000 226 scholarships	\$1.2 million 350 scholarships	\$1.6 million 500 scholarships
	Reduction in students who identify financial difficulties as a reason for considering early departure from university.	39.4%	37%	35%
Enabling environments 	Increased access and retention of students with disability, students from regional and remote Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	See above		
	Increase in Learning Resources rating in the QILT Student Experience Survey.	66.8%	75%	Achieve above national average (83.6% in 2024)
	Student participation in regional, remote or digital campuses and study centres (such as Broome, Oran Park and Liverpool).	63	235	550
Institutional culture, leadership and representation 	Progress toward milestones of the Student Equity and Diversity Strategy aligned to Implementation Plan.	0%	30%	100%

* Equity access, participation, success and attainment data is from 2024, Department of Education. Retention data is from 2023 (note a one-year lag is typical). QILT data is from the 2024 Student Experience Survey, Quality Indicators of Learning & Teaching.

LSES: Low socio-economic status RRR: Regional, rural and remote NESB: Non-English speaking background





5-Star Ratings*



Skills Development Full-Time Employment Student:Teacher Ratio

* Good Universities Guide 2026, undergraduate and postgraduate categories

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