

**AUSTRALIAN  
TECHNOLOGY  
NETWORK**  
OF UNIVERSITIES

# SUBMISSION

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**ATEC TERTIARY ROADMAP  
29 JUNE 2026**



## The ATN is well-advanced in tertiary harmonisation and committed to doing more

### 1. Our submission demonstrates that existing joined-up systems developed by ATN members offer many insights for the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) in developing a Roadmap for a true tertiary system

- 1.1 The Australian Technology Network of Universities has an extensive track record in delivering large-scale, tertiary-harmonised programs.
- 1.2 Our experts can offer insights across the priority work areas identified by ATEC. We invite partnership with ATEC and Jobs and Skills Australia, in the national interest, to ensure the success of this vitally important objective.
- 1.3 ATN members have long individually pushed for a unified university-TAFE system, arguing for blended co-design and new funding models to support co-delivered and stackable pathways in their submissions to the Universities Accord.

### 2. ATEC's three work streams align with ATN's long standing

- 2.1 ATN Universities supports the development of a Tertiary Harmonisation Roadmap and welcomes the Discussion Paper's learner journey framework as the organising principle for reform.
- 2.2 The ATN Universities support the ATEC's three priority work streams: National Credit Recognition Framework, Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) reform, and the National Skills Taxonomy.



## Expert design work and better enabling infrastructure are needed across each of the three ATEC work programs


### 3. Transparency and incentives are critical for a national framework for credit to be effective

- 3.1 ATN members each publish a clearly defined progression from VET qualifications into higher education qualifications, supporting transparency in how credit is applied across key pathways.
- 3.2 We support the opt-in National Credit Recognition Framework, but design should centre on transparency and published precedent rather than prescriptive credit schedules. For example, Curtin University's CrMS would create a shared, learner-facing database for such credit.
- 3.3 Design work is needed on using Commonwealth Supported Places as incentives. Mission-Based Compacts may be a mechanism through which steps towards harmonisation can be both acknowledged and accelerated.

### 4. Enabling digital infrastructure is required

- 4.1 We have emphasised the need for enabling data infrastructure (a Skills Passport, more seamless pathways, and a simplified taxonomy).
- 4.2 On AQF reform and the National Skills Taxonomy, ATN Universities has consistently advocated for action on the relevant recommendations of the 2019 AQF Review.
- 4.3 Our experience and recommendation is that these mechanisms must be designed together, not in isolation.



A young woman with blonde hair, wearing a white top and a grey cardigan, and a young man with dark hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt and dark pants, are walking and smiling on a university campus. The woman is carrying a black bag. In the background, there is a modern building with a sign that says "VERY P WELCOM VERY TUDEN ELEBRA".

**THE MANY AGENCIES WORKING ON  
HARMONISATION SHOULD WORK TO A PLAN  
THAT BUILDS ON THE PROGRESS ALREADY  
BEING MADE.**

## 5. Coordinating the many agencies active in this space is critical

5.1 The ATN Universities believe it is also important to maintain a clear delineation of responsibilities between Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA), the ATEC, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

5.2 The road to harmonisation should also adopt a “single request, many users” data principle, to reduce rather than add to provider administrative burden.

## 6. Building on proven inroads will accelerate progress

6.1 Several dual sector universities in Victoria, including Swinburne University and RMIT, have shown how universities’ expertise and scale can help bridge the gap directly. Support for more universities to pursue dual sector strategies could rapidly add scale across the tertiary spectrum, especially outside of Victoria.

6.2 The ATN Universities support an independent, well-advised ATEC in driving harmonisation, supported by JSA and other Commonwealth agencies.

6.2 We recognise the Commission is carrying a heavy reform load on compressed timelines, and we are willing to provide support given ATN member universities’ proven experience in at-scale harmonisation. Member submissions provide a range of details, and direct engagement can provide more opportunity to draw on existing lessons learned.



# The structural case for harmonisation is settled

We have two decades of reviews that effectively demonstrate the imperative and the logic (for example, the Bradley Review, the AQF Review, the Australian Universities Accord, and the JSA Roadmap).

**The question is: how do we get harmonisation design and delivery right?**

## 7. The ATN Universities offer direct evidence of a scope and scale no other peak body can

7.1 ATN Universities has long worked towards 360 degree articulation between sectors, and our member universities are already developing the joined-up system in practice. ATN members now offer dual-sector delivery, a long history of credit sharing, the My eQuals RPL pilot (Newcastle), and TAFE articulation agreements.

7.2 UoN and UTS both collaborate with TAFE NSW - UTS through its UTS-TAFE Integrated Programs and the Institute of Applied Technology - Digital located at TAFE NSW, and UoN through articulated programs in nursing, construction and aviation and shared facilities with TAFE NSW such as at Ourimbah.

7.3 The ATN Universities' applied, industry-connected profile makes our universities the structural destination for VET-pathway learners, including the low-SES (11%) and First Nations (12%) cohorts who use these pathways at above-average rates. This gives the ATN Universities a distinct role: we can be a trusted advisor to the ATEC on what works at the coalface and provide the assurance that the reform path is credible.

7.4 Higher-level apprenticeships and collaborative models are the clearest embodiment of workforce resilience and productivity, and the ATN Universities can show both their value and what they need to scale up. RMIT's "Earn and Learn" Degree Apprenticeship is a live, cited example. RMIT has also delivered higher apprenticeships for around 900 social and disability services workers during COVID. Other ATN members are exploring similarly innovative modes of delivery.

# The recipe for system growth

These models are hard to sustain. The mapping burden, stretch on staff capacity, relationship fragility, and differing policy and regulatory jurisdiction make harmonisation a worthy yet challenging proposition.

To grow a truly harmonised system at national scale, specific government support is needed. For example: dedicated resourcing, regulatory accommodation (a tertiary sandbox), and apprenticeship-definition changes that let higher-education-spanning models access incentives and targeted student support calibrated to meet student needs and address labour-capacity requirements.

Without the recommended supports, UK experience shows degree apprenticeships can fail to widen participation. This affirms the criticality of building in targeted equity support at the earliest stages of a national push for tertiary harmonisation.

## THE KEY MESSAGE

## FROM ATN UNIVERSITIES

1. The ATN universities are **already demonstrating** the joined-up tertiary system the ATEC's Roadmap envisions.
2. We offer ATEC **trusted operational evidence** privately, and the public assurance of a credible, proven path to harmonisation.
3. We are **willing to partner** with the ATEC to scale-up what works and avoid what doesn't.



ATN Universities is ready to provide sustained, structured sector input and practical capability support, including reciprocal exchange.

I am open to discussing these options with the ATEC in the interests of successfully reaching Australia's tertiary harmonisation objectives.

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