

Dual Sector Research University

Unifying vocational and higher education

- Definition
- Examples
- Moving Forward



Dual Sector Research University

The dual sector research university unifies vocational education and training with higher education and research.

Dual sector research universities are defined by having a large student population in both sectors and (in most cases) by awarding research doctorates.

In general, greater than 20 per cent of the load is in each of vocational and higher education.

The dual focus allows these universities to provide a **seamless pathway** for students to move from vocational training to higher education within the same institution; and **research aligned with practice and impact**.

- **Dual-sector model:** These universities have significant student loads in both the higher education sector (degrees and diplomas) and the vocational education and training (VET) sector (skills-based training).
- **Research:** A key defining feature is that dual-sector research universities engage in substantial use-inspired research and award applied research doctorates.
- **Student pathways:** An integrated model that aims to make it effortless for students to transition between vocational and academic pathways.

“Everything counts. Everything ladders”

RMIT

“RMIT is a dual sector university with a strong international reputation for excellence in education, applied research, and engagement with government, industry and communities.”

QS World University Rankings 2026

- **125** globally (about 26,000) **10** in Australia (42 total)
- QS Top 50 Subjects 2025: **26** Art & Design, **21** Architecture/Built Environment



Student Enrolment (headcount)	2024
Higher Education (HE)	78,228
Vocational Education (VE)	16,926
Foundation Studies (FS)	939
Total RMIT	96,093

Victoria University (Melbourne)

About:

- 49,106 student enrolments in 2024
- Slightly over 40% of VU's students live in the western Melbourne region.
- 47% of VU higher education students are the first in their family to undertake a degree.
- 59% of new domestic commencements at VU each year are vocational education and training (VET) students.
- Divisions: HE, VET, Enterprise & Digital, Finance, Research & Impact, Indigenous and EDI, External Relations & Partnerships

VU rankings:

- Ranked in the world's top 2% (*Times Higher Education – THE* – World University Rankings)
- 400-700s globally, with strong showings in specific areas like Sport (Top 10 worldwide) and exceptional results in Australian student surveys for Teaching Quality, Skills Development, and Peer Engagement. World leader in block model teaching.



University of Highlands and Islands

Based in Scotland, blending VET (e.g. Colleges) with higher education within a single university structure:

- 10 individual colleges and each college/research centre has its own campus in different locations; not all courses are available at every campus.
- seamless pathways for students to progress from skills-based courses to degrees and work
- crucial for region's economy - linking learning to local industry needs

What "Dual Sector" Means for UHI:

- **Integrated Learning:** UHI includes various colleges (like North Highland College) and training centers, allowing students to move between vocational qualifications (HNCs, HNDs) and university degrees (BA, BSc, etc.) more easily than in separate systems.
- **Regional Focus:** Strengthens the connection between education and the specific economic needs of the Highlands and Islands: energy and engineering.
- **Career Pathways:** Clear progression routes, allowing individuals to gain work-ready skills and then upgrade to higher qualifications, or vice-versa, supporting lifelong learning.



UHI

31,000 students, including 19,779 further education students (non-degree, preparing for jobs or pathways), and 11,210 higher education students.

Overall

- Dual-sector universities include substantial amounts of both vocational (skills-based) and higher education (academic-based programs and research) in the same institution.
- Often regionally focused, the dual sector research university does everything from upgrading to applied doctoral research solving challenges in the region and nation.
- Diverse and responsive

TRU has been dual-sector since 2005 and continues to evolve


- We embrace our unique foundations and strengths.
- Moving towards PhD-granting.
- Our ambition is ABE to PhD: a Research University that unifies vocational and higher education, academic excellence and access, and use-inspired research and education applied to challenges in Interior BC and contributing to provincial and global futures.

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Library

Features

- Students have access to both trades and vocational programming and academic and professional degrees
 - Vocational education: Preparing students for direct entry into skilled trades and technical careers (like healthcare, tech, trades) with certificates, diplomas, or apprenticeships
 - Professional education: Degree and postgraduate programs leading to specific, regulated careers, often involving professional degrees (e.g. BComm, BScN, JD, BEd) and licensing exams, alongside ongoing Continuing Professional Education (CPE) for skill maintenance. Examples: Law, Nursing, Teacher Education.
- Industry and communities are key collaborators in research and innovation that matters to the region. Students are solving real-world challenges and connecting research to their jobs and communities in the region.
- Fully integrated credentialing system, geared to accelerated completion time and therefore less tuition cost to the student, and faster transition to jobs and contributing to local communities.

Different from:

- **Generic:** A dual sector research university is not a provincial research university which has a generic, expansive reach:

“to provide instruction in all branches of knowledge”; and “the pursuit of original research in all branches of knowledge “(*University Act* s.47)

- **Research-optional:**

A special purpose teaching university provides applied and professional programs leading to baccalaureate and masters degrees, doing research where resources from time to time permit, undertake and maintain applied research and scholarly activities to support the programs of the special purpose, teaching university. (*University Act* s.47.1)