

## Regional Universities Network

### A summary of the progress made so far in implementing the Accord

The universities of the Regional Universities Network (RUN) are committed to enhancing their capacity and sustainability through greater collaboration as a network of like-minded universities.

In a national first for Australia, RUN is committed to a multilateral Accord, which covers the nine goals listed below. Some are aspirational, and will take time to work towards. Significant progress has been made towards others.

- *Making subjects available to students across the RUN network*

RUN universities are collaborating in teaching and learning, including in areas of national need where the market is thin. For example, there is cross-institutional enrolment between the University of Southern Queensland and the University of New England, and the University of the Sunshine Coast in engineering; the University of New England is collaborating with the University of Southern Queensland in arts and languages (including allowing students to study up to a third of their units as a cross-institutional enrolment and an agreement for the University of New England to teach Indonesian to University of Southern Queensland students); and the University of New England is collaborating with Southern Cross University in marine science courses and in a Masters of Clinical Leadership.

We are now working towards further collaboration across the network in languages, engineering, maths, science, teacher education in maths and science, and in performing arts. Health sciences will be an area for future consideration.

We will share and benchmark student data.

- *Collaborating to support improved policy development for the regions*

RUN researchers have discussed collaborating in regional development, including economic development, enterprise and innovation, environment and sustainability, health and wellbeing and social impact and education. Among other initiatives, we are considering ways we might be able to work as a group with the Australian Medicare Local Alliance.

We will commission an investigation into the social, cultural and environmental impact of our universities, and progress broader discussion in the network around regional policy.

- *Collaborating in research and research training, including in joint supervision of higher degree by research students*

RUN universities are sharing data about our research effort, and mapping our joint capacity. The University of Ballarat's Nanya Station and the University of Sunshine Coast's Fraser Island Research facilities have been made available to researchers across RUN. We will convene "think tanks" of RUN's top researchers to reflect on issues of national importance such as food innovation and food

security; environmental sustainability (e.g. future energy, future water), health innovation / rural and regional population health; digital economy; and regional economic development. Opportunities for RUN engagement, collaboration and policy development will be identified.

RUN universities will work towards closer collaboration in research training, including in the joint supervision across our institutions of students undertaking higher degrees by research, and in the delivery of course work relevant to these students.

- *Collaboration in international activities*

RUN is working on joint policy development with respect to attracting international students to regional Australian campuses, and encouraging regional Australian students to go overseas. Further consideration will be given to collaboration in international research, and in international representation.

- *Funding joint appointments*

Consideration will be given to funding joint appointments, including post-doctoral fellowships, and in areas where sharing of expertise makes sense.

- *Offering multi-badged degrees*

We will work towards potentially having more than one RUN university on testamurs for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

- *Formalising credit transfer arrangements for students between RUN universities*

RUN universities will formalise credit transfer arrangements for students between RUN universities as our collaboration in teaching and learning increases, building on the existing arrangements.

- *Making internal staff vacancies and professional development activities available to staff at other RUN universities*

RUN is progressing collaboration in professional development activities for staff across our institutions. We are working through processes to facilitate secondment of staff and making internal staff vacancies available to employees at other RUN universities.

- *Consolidation of appropriate support functions across the RUN universities*

As a first step, RUN will compile an inventory of our support systems (e.g. finance, human resources) so we can determine what we have in common, and when we are intending to upgrade or change systems. The University of New England and Southern Cross University have already undertaken a major joint procurement for electricity, and our universities will look for further opportunities to combine in this way.

We will share policies and information on processes and benchmark relevant performance data.