2026 EDITION

IN FOCUS: STUDENT DEMAND



OPEN UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA


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In the spirit of reconciliation, Open Universities Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country and their connections to the land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today, acknowledging their continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices.

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT DEMAND

Understanding student demand has never been more important – or more complex.

As student behaviours shift and traditional metrics and signals become less reliable, we need a more connected view of how learners explore, evaluate and commit to study.

This report brings those signals together to do just that. It's designed to give universities a clearer, more complete view of how student demand is taking shape in today's market.

Demand for higher education is evolving. Over the past year, we've seen continued strength in early-stage interest, alongside more deliberate and considered decision-making from learners.

The students who Open Universities Australia (OUA) attracts are increasingly focused on journeys that lead to clear outcomes including employment, career growth and financial stability. Typically older, they are often working full-time and balancing study alongside careers, families and other responsibilities.

Because of their non-traditional paths to study, they are highly motivated but they also need support. This means they are seeking greater impartial guidance and reassurance as they navigate their options, while also looking for more structural support. This includes factors such as flexibility to fit study around their existing commitments, accessible entry points to get started sooner, and clear pathways to move from entry-level study into qualifications.

We're proud of our evolution since we published the last print version of the Student Demand Report in 2025. This year, building on feedback from our university partners, we've revised the report's structure to enable us to zoom in on the Fields of Education that present the greatest opportunities for growth, while layering in key optimisation insights for those Fields where we have found demand is largely being met by current supply. We hope it provides even greater value for our partners as you balance current and future product strategy planning.

As demand becomes more complex to interpret, competitive advantages will come from a deeper understanding of not just what learners do, but why they do it. This is where Open Universities Australia plays a unique role. Through our national marketplace and direct connection to aspiring and current students, we have a real-time view into the evolving needs of learners. Our attention is on providing our partners with clearer insights into how demand is forming and where future opportunities lie.

We look forward to continuing this work together.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Demand for higher education is evolving. At the same time, engagement patterns are shifting, making it harder to rely on metrics alone to interpret demand.

When looking across all Fields of Education, three key demand observations stand out:



EXPLORATION REMAINS RESILIENT

7% growth in volume of searches indicates sustained interest in online study.



RELIANCE ON GUIDANCE IS RISING

17% increase in consultations booked with our student advisory team suggests learners are increasingly seeking reassurance and support through direct, impartial guidance.



PRIORITY IS ON STUDY LINKED TO CLEAR OUTCOMES

Demand is shifting across Fields, with stronger momentum in areas linked to career outcomes.

The learners Open Universities Australia attracts are distinct: typically older, working, and balancing study with other commitments. Their participation depends on confidence, as well as accessible, flexible, achievable study, with clear pathways to real outcomes. To unlock growth, partners can expand access, remove barriers, improve clarity, and refine how programs align with learner needs.

When we look across the full student journey, from search through to enrolment, alongside current listings volume and structure, two distinct ways to unlock student demand come into view. This report uncovers insights across all Fields of Education, split between two categories based on current opportunities for growth.



ACCESS EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

The greatest opportunities for growth exist within the following four key Fields of Education, for which demand signals and current portfolio settings point to an opportunity to expand programs. Increasing access, particularly through more flexible entry points, such as enabling courses including FEE-FREE Uni Ready (FFUR), undergraduate certificates, and postgraduate open access single subjects, can help unlock additional student participation.

Engineering and Related Technologies

Engineering is a clear high-growth Field, with strong and increasing demand across search, engagement and enrolments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Learners demonstrate targeted intent, often searching for specific disciplines such as Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. Despite this, program availability in key areas is limited, constraining the ability for demand to fully translate into participation. Enrolment growth is the strongest of any Field, with single subjects playing a critical role as an entry point. The opportunity lies in expanding both discipline-specific programs and flexible, pathway-led entry options.

Management and Commerce

Management and Commerce is a large, mature Field with strong early-stage demand, particularly at the postgraduate level. Search behaviour is highly concentrated in career-led areas such as Commerce, Finance, Leadership, Marketing, and MBA. However, this demand is not consistently translating into enrolment, with overall commencements declining despite pockets of growth. High program volume suggests choice is not the constraint, but rather how learners access and progress into study. There is a clear opportunity to expand participation through more accessible pathways, particularly into postgraduate study.

Health

Health is one of the largest and most diverse Fields, with strong and growing search demand across multiple disciplines. While engagement and enrolment remain high, performance varies across the journey, with postgraduate demand converting more strongly than undergraduate. Demand at the undergraduate level remains high relative to available programs, indicating a gap in accessible entry points. Learners are showing clear interest in flexible pathways, particularly those that support progression into regulated professions like Nursing. Expanding entry-level pathways and undergraduate options presents a significant opportunity to expand participation.

Society and Culture

Society and Culture shows strong and steady demand, with growth emerging in areas such as Law, Criminology, Mental Health, Social Work and Economics. Engagement remains high, and while there was a slight decline in overall enrolments, this was driven by a decline in Behavioural Science. Demand and enrolment is strongly connected to programs with flexible entry formats such as single subjects and undergraduate certificates. Expanding pathway options in high-demand areas including Law and Mental Health presents a clear opportunity to increase participation and support progression into full qualifications.

OPTIMISATION OPPORTUNITIES

The remaining opportunities sit within Fields where supply is already broadly aligned with demand. Growth is less dependent on adding programs; instead, the opportunity may be to improve how existing programs are communicated, structured and offered.

Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies

A smaller Field where demand is present but constrained, with softer performance across engagement and enrolments. With existing coverage in place, the opportunity lies in improving conversion through clearer positioning, simpler entry, and stronger pathways.

Architecture and Building

A low-volume Field with declining engagement and enrolments despite moderate search growth. Rather than expanding supply, the focus should be on widening participation and exploring more flexible or modular entry options within existing offerings.

Creative Arts

In this mid-sized Field, undergraduate demand continues to soften, with only modest growth emerging at postgraduate level. Given limited scale, the priority is to support and optimise existing programs while monitoring shifts in learner interest and participation.

Education

A large, stable Field where demand remains strong, with increasing demand at the postgraduate level. Growth is likely to come from improving accessibility into existing pathways, particularly in areas where workforce need remain high.

Information Technology

A large and diverse Field, with strong early interest that is not consistently translating into engagement or enrolment. These trends reflect a dip in confidence in entry-level career outcomes and increasing recognition of skills-based learning aligned with employer and vendor needs. Opportunity lies in refining how programs are structured and presented, with a focus on modular, skills-based learning aligned to industry demand.

Natural and Physical Sciences

Early-stage demand in this small Field is strengthening, particularly through single subjects that support study in adjacent Fields. With current programs largely meeting demand, the focus should be on enhancing pathways and positioning to better support progression, especially to adjacent fields.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to help universities respond to student demand with clarity and confidence, with insights on:

- what is influencing demand movements, from changing learner behaviour to the role of portfolio design and access pathways
- where opportunity exists to expand programs, strengthen pathways, and better align offerings to the needs of today's learners

As learner behaviour shifts, we need a more connected view of the signals behind demand. By linking how learners explore, compare and commit to study, these signals show where demand is emerging, what's influencing it, and how to respond with confidence

REPORT REFRESH FOR 2026

In response to changing market dynamics and evolving partner requirements, this year's report takes a refined approach.

What remains:

- Open Universities Australia data as a real-time view of national online demand
- Fields of Education analysis for comparability
- Visibility of demand across the full student journey

What is new:

- Clearer interpretation of what's changing
  - We delve deeper than previous years to contextualise shifts in metrics.
- A more targeted focus
  - We spotlight particular Fields of Education where expanding programs and pathways can remove barriers to participation and growth. We refer to these as 'access expansion opportunities'.
  - Our insights for Fields of Education that present more limited growth opportunities are categorised as 'optimisation opportunities'.
- A more complete view of demand
  - This year's insights are richer than before, as we have considered a range of internal and external data sets. By demand, we refer to aspiring learner activity on the Open Universities Australia marketplace, measured through search, engagement, and enrolments. Demand is not a single metric; it is a journey. We combine signals across each stage of decision making to understand how learners move from interest to enrolment.

DEFINING SIGNALS OF DEMAND

Demand refers to aspiring learners' activity on the Open Universities Australia marketplace, shown through search, engagement and enrolments. It reflects how learners explore options, evaluate fit, and commit to study.

We connect signals from each stage to show how interest develops into enrolment.

EXPLORING OPTIONS

Learners are exploring their interests and beginning to imagine what study could look like.

Key signals:

- **Marketplace Searches** – What learners are actively looking for

Supported by external search trends (e.g., Google).

COMPARING AND CONSIDERING

Learners are actively comparing options to find the right program and provider for them.

Key signals:

- **Program Page Views (PPV)** - Visibility and browsing behaviour
- **Student Interest (SI)** – Depth of engagement

Supported by Student Advisory consultations and interpreted in the context of portfolio listings.

CHOOSING AND ENROLLING

Learners are taking the next step, committing to study and starting their journey.

Key signals:

- **Commencements** - Enrolments into single subjects or degrees
- **Award Type Mix** – How learners choose to start

Supported by further audience profiling to understand demand and preferences.

For a detailed breakdown of the data sources used in this report, see Appendix.

STRUCTURE OF INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Access expansion opportunities

We've selected four Fields of Education for deeper analysis to uncover the most immediate opportunities to expand programs and pathways and unlock growth. These are explored under the 'access expansion opportunities' category:

- Engineering and Related Technologies
- Society and Culture
- Health
- Management and Commerce

Optimisation opportunities

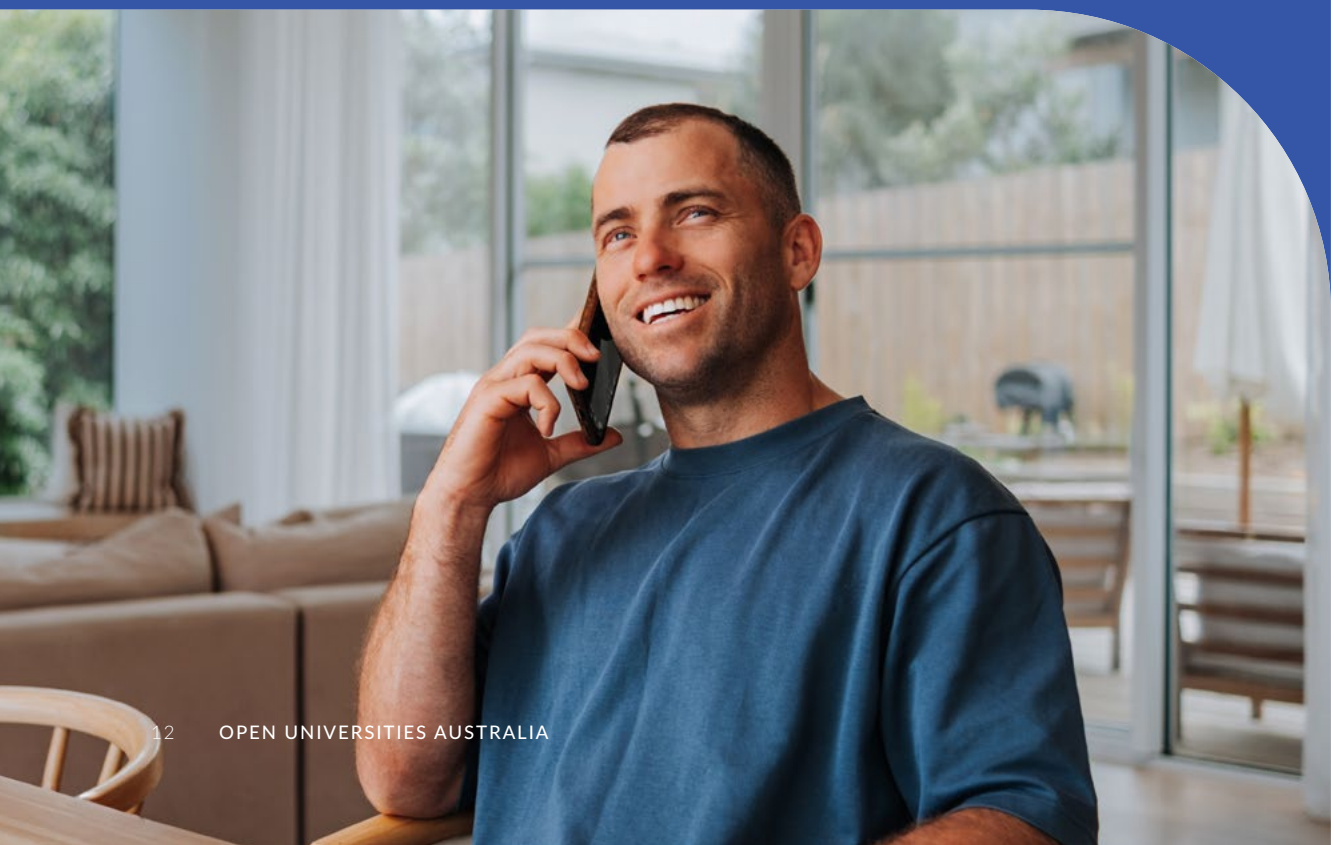
The remaining six Fields of Education with more stable opportunities in 2026 are explored under the 'optimisation opportunities' category. These are:

- Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies
- Architecture and Building
- Creative Arts
- Education
- Information Technology
- Natural and Physical Sciences

UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCE

The students Open Universities Australia attracts are not your typical university entrants. They come to study with different starting points, different pressures, and different expectations of what higher education needs to offer.

For many, the decision to study isn't straightforward. It sits alongside work, family and life commitments. It's a considered step, often taken after time away from formal education, and driven by a clear desire to improve their future.



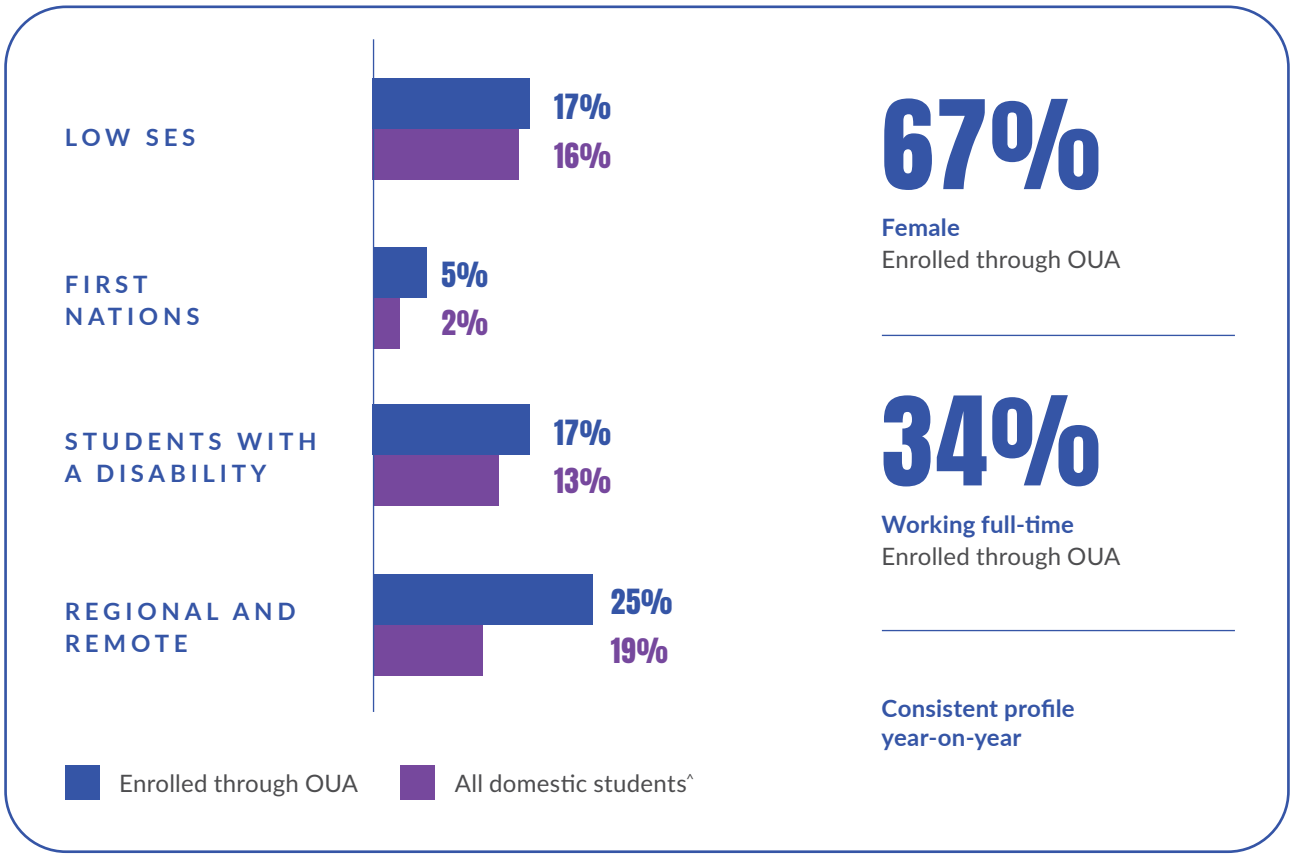
Understanding who these learners are helps explain how and why they engage with study differently:

- **Balancing multiple priorities**
  Typically older and often working full-time, these learners are fitting study around careers, families, and caring responsibilities. Flexibility isn't a preference. It's essential.
- **Seeking clarity in a complex system**
  Many want to pursue university but feel overwhelmed by the volume of choice and unsure which path is right for them. They are motivated, but need reassurance, clear guidance, and a simple way to get started.
- **Taking non-linear pathways into study**
  Their journey into higher education rarely follows a traditional path. Instead, they build confidence and capability over time, often beginning with single subjects, short credentials, or entry pathways before progressing into a full qualification.

This is a different kind of learner. One who is purposeful, pragmatic, and looking for study that fits into their life. Unlocking their participation requires more than access alone. It requires pathways, flexibility, and support designed around how they actually engage.

Almost half of students enrolled through Open Universities Australia identify with at least one equity category, including learners from regional and remote communities, low socioeconomic backgrounds, First Nations backgrounds, and students living with disability.

Students in these situations are underrepresented in traditional pathways, but highly motivated to participate when the right access and support are in place. By connecting universities with learners who may not otherwise engage in higher education, Open Universities Australia supports partner institutions to expand access and contribute to sector-wide equity participation targets.



Source: 2025 Open Universities Australia data, Open Universities Australia degree commencing & single subject students

^ACSES interactive tool for Equity sizing; *Department of Education 2024 All Domestic Students

Stable age profile

Open Universities Australia's age profile remains stable, with a continued skew toward older learners compared to the broader domestic student cohort. We are also receiving increasing engagement from a younger audience, with consistent growth over the last five years among those aged 16-20, mostly non school leavers. This highlights the role that online and flexible study options play in expanding participation beyond traditional university pathways.

Age	Open Universities Australia (2025)	All domestic students*(2024)
Under 19	6%	15%
19-24	33%	46%
25-29	17%	12%
30-39	23%	14%
40-49	15%	8%
50+	11%	4%

Source: 2025 Open Universities Australia data, Open Universities Australia degree commencing & single subject students, *Department of Education 2024 All Domestic Students

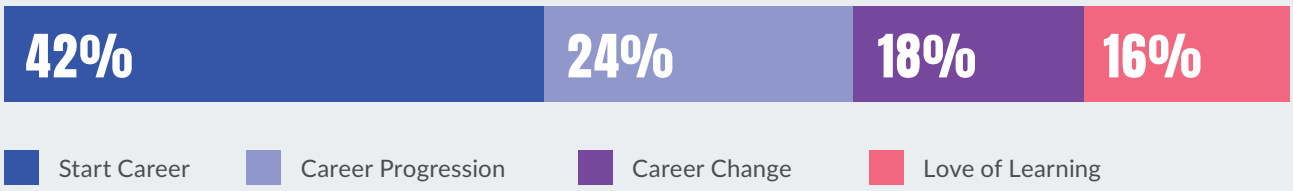
Main reason for study

Insights into learner motivations are drawn from student responses collected during enrolment. They give Open Universities Australia and our partners a clearer view of the goals students bring to study, and the outcomes they hope to move towards.

The responses show a strongly outcome-focused cohort. Study decisions are closely tied to career progression, employability and financial security, with learners seeking qualifications that can support more purposeful and stable futures. Notably, 84% are focused on purposeful career progression.

There is important nuance behind that career focus. Many students studying through Open Universities Australia are already employed but may not see their current role as their long-term career. This suggests students are not only looking to progress in place, but often seeking to change direction, formalise experience or build a pathway into something more sustainable.

A growing proportion also brings prior vocational education and training (VET) experience. This reflects increasingly non-linear learner journeys and reinforces the need for more connected tertiary pathways across the education system.



SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

Open Universities Australia enables aspiring learners to achieve their study goals, whether it is building confidence with preparatory units, or flexible pathways like single subjects and undergraduate certificates, to full undergraduate or postgraduate degrees.

Career starter: preparation program

"I've been out of study for a long time, and I hope this course will help me get used to study, and as a bridge into my degree."

Career booster: single subject as a pathway into undergraduate degree

"I've been hesitant to study for years, never thinking university was an option after graduating without an ATAR. Now, my goal is to become certified."

Career changer: undergraduate certificate as a pathway into a bachelor degree

"An undergraduate certificate in education is a fast-track, a six-month university qualification that gets me the guaranteed pathway with full credit toward a Bachelor of Education."



DIFFERING DEMAND ACROSS FIELDS OF EDUCATION

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ACROSS FIELDS

Exploration remains resilient

Interest in online study continues to hold strong in the early stages of exploration.

- Marketplace visitors are increasing
- Search volumes continue to grow year-on-year
- Learners are actively exploring a wide range of study options

This points to sustained interest in study, with shifts in how aspiring learners explore and take the next step.

Rising demand for guidance

As choice expands and pathways become more complex, learners are seeking more support to navigate their options.

- Increased reliance on Student Advisory services
- Greater need for reassurance before committing
- Preference for clear, impartial guidance over self-directed decision making

This highlights the growing importance of human support in an AI-influenced environment, where trust and clarity play a critical role in conversion.

Demand reflects shifting priorities

Variation across Fields of Education points to a change in what aspiring learners value most from study.

- Stronger interest in career-aligned and outcome-driven Fields
- Increased focus on job security, progression and financial stability
- More deliberate decision making when selecting a course or pathway

These shifts indicate that learners are approaching study with clearer intent, prioritising options that deliver tangible career and skill outcomes.

STUDENT ADVISORY GROWTH

- 17% increase year-on-year in consultations (new and returning prospects only)
- 48,000 hours consulting with students

ACCESS EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

What follows is a deeper look at the opportunities where demand is outpacing current offerings. Our deep dives into these four Fields of Education bring together key data points, practical insights, and a clear view of where new program opportunities, especially shorter forms of learning that enable access, can support participation.



AN ACCESS EXPANSION OPPORTUNITY

ENGINEERING AND RELATED TECHNOLOGIES

Engineering is a clear high-growth Field, with strong and increasing demand across search, engagement and enrolments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Learners demonstrate targeted intent, often searching for specific disciplines such as Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. Despite this, program availability in key areas is limited, constraining the ability for demand to fully translate into participation. Enrolment growth is the strongest of any Field, with single subjects playing a critical role as an entry point. The opportunity lies in expanding both discipline-specific programs and flexible, pathway-led entry options.



EXPLORATION

Search terms demonstrate targeted interest

Demand in Engineering is strong and growing, with share of search volumes consistent year-on-year.

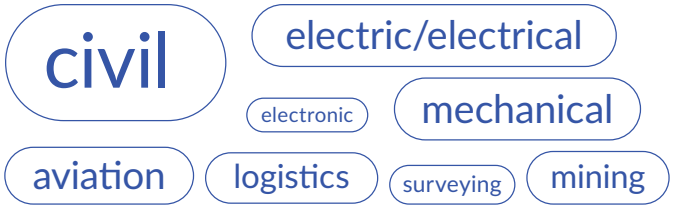
Unlike some other Fields of Education where searches tend to be broad, prospective engineering students are specific in their searches, suggesting they have a clear idea of their specialisation.

Analysis of nearly 370 unique search terms, grouped into thematic categories, shows Mechanical Engineering remains a stalwart of search demand, attracting consistently high share of searches in this Field. Other growth areas include:

- Aviation (+4%)
- Civil (+11%)
- Electrical Engineering (+4%)

This concentration of search across specific areas highlights a cohort entering the market with clear preferences, shaping how they move into active consideration.

TOP 8 CATEGORIES OF SEARCH TERMS



100k

Volume of Engineering searches on open.edu.au in 2025

11%

Growth in volume of searches year-on-year

Source: Searches on open.edu.au, 2025 Calendar year

Meet John

A 34-year-old from NSW, aiming to study a full course. Highest level of study was VET/TAFE.

> *"It's my first university course, it's to see if I can do it. My goal is to be an engineer at some point in the future."*

Meet Laurel

A 24-year-old learner from Queensland, with a Certificate III as her highest level of education.

> *"I hope the course will give me the option to get a decent land-based job so that I can have a family and not have to work at sea anymore."*

Source: New Student Goal Setting Reflection, 2025

CONSIDERATION

Overall, engagement patterns signal clear undergraduate intent, setting a strong foundation for conversion into enrolment.

107k

Program page views in 2025

88,000 were undergraduate

3.3k

Student Interest in 2025

2,800 were undergraduate

50

programs*

24 UG and 26 PG

*Total number of programs available at some stage in 2025. At the time of printing, 9 undergraduate and 10 postgraduate programs are offered.

Stable engagement signals, more selective portfolio

Engineering is a unique Field that highlights how engagement is affected by portfolio fluidity. Total page views and interest in Engineering declined year-on-year. However, listing dynamics of a fluid portfolio has concentrated demand into a smaller set of programs.

Presently, programs that meet growing search demand in areas such as Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering are limited. Other growth areas including undergraduate Aviation are also restrained.

Taking this into consideration, engineering demonstrates strong growth in engagement per listing, up 42% year-on-year. This demonstrates that engagement is high when we have programs students are looking for.

Although programs were evenly split by undergraduate and postgraduate, and aspiring students were exploring program options at both levels of study, demand is concentrated at the undergraduate level.

Overall, engagement patterns signal clear undergraduate intent, setting a strong foundation for conversion into enrolment.

ENROLLING

Growth in Engineering degree commencements and single subject students

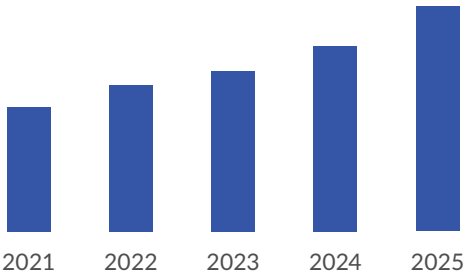
22%

growth

Engineering leads enrolment growth

Engineering continues a strong trajectory of enrolment growth, recording the strongest of any field in 2025.

Degree commencements and single subject students increased by 22% led by undergraduate.



Single subjects in strongest demand

Student enrolment data highlighted the most common starting point for new to Open Universities Australia students was a single subject (at over 80%* for the new cohort). This is higher than many Fields. Alongside our student goal setting data, this reinforces the role of single subjects as a key entry pathway, enabling learners to commence study with flexibility before committing to a full program.

EQUITY SPOTLIGHT

Equity participation remains a defining feature of engineering demand, with 42% of new degree commencements and single subject students coming from equity cohorts.*

Over 1 in 4 enrolments in Engineering were female students, which is higher than the 21% reported in the total domestic market.

Source: Enrolments, 2025 Academic Year.
*Excludes enrolments from Lead Referral partners. External reference is 2023 Department of Education data via ACED.

ACCESS LED OPPORTUNITIES

Our data shows demand in Engineering is growing. Opportunity for growth lies in introducing distinctive offerings that fill gaps created by portfolio changes. Expanding flexible, generic entry pathways and adding open access single subjects can remove barriers to study by enabling students to start smaller and build toward a degree.

Fill program gaps in high demand areas

Search data shows growing interest in Mechanical, Civil, and Electrical Engineering but presently we have no options for students.

Programs at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels would fill current gaps and appeal to aspiring students, including both career starters and those looking to upskill.

Add generic foundation entry level programs

Undergraduate certificates as pathways into full degrees are successful in other Fields, but none exist in Engineering.

Generic sub-bachelor programs that enable future choice by creating entry pathways into multiple degree level courses would fill a current gap.

Offer open access single subjects

Student goal setting and enrolment data show not all students are degree-ready.

Single subjects that articulate into multiple degrees, or bridging subjects in areas such as mathematics, would enable students to access study related to their desired career.

AN ACCESS EXPANSION OPPORTUNITY

HEALTH

Health is one of the largest and most diverse Fields, with strong and growing search demand across multiple disciplines. While engagement and enrolment remain high, performance varies across the journey, with postgraduate demand converting more strongly than undergraduate. Demand at the undergraduate level remains high relative to available programs, indicating a gap in accessible entry points. Learners are showing clear interest in flexible pathways, particularly those that support progression into regulated professions like Nursing. Expanding entry-level pathways and undergraduate options presents a significant opportunity to expand participation.



EXPLORATION

Varied demand across areas

Demand for Health remains strong, retaining the second highest share of searches on the marketplace.

Searches increased by 7% year-on-year, signaling continued demand for career-aligned health disciplines such as Health Science, Public Health, Nursing and Nutrition.

Diversity in demand, with growth in some areas

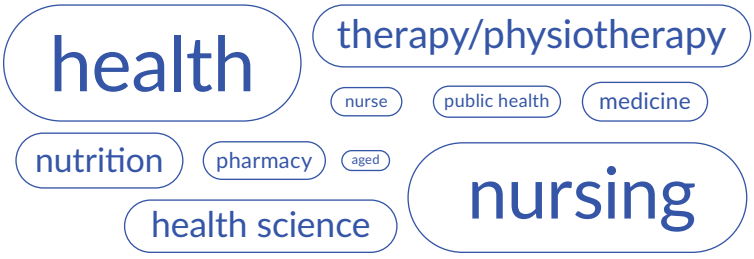
Health demand is characterised by scale and diversity, with over 1,000 unique search terms. The top 10 categories represent 44% of activity, with most areas growing. Standouts include:

- Health Science (+20%)
- Mental Health (+9%)
- Nutrition (+22%)
- Nursing (+17%)
- Therapy/Physiotherapy (+16%)
- Pharmacy (+12%)

While core areas such as Health and Nursing attract the largest share of searches, growth in Public Health, Nutrition, Health Science and Therapy/Physiotherapy points to rising demand for relevant Health programs.

The Bachelor of Nursing consistently attracts nearly 5,000 searches, the highest of any named program in any field. This ongoing demand highlights the importance of accessible nursing pathways and presents a clear opportunity for future growth within the portfolio.

TOP 10 CATEGORIES OF SEARCH TERMS



324k

Volume of Health searches on open.edu.au in 2025

7%

Growth in volume of searches year-on-year

Source: Searches on open.edu.au, 2025 Calendar year

Meet Sarah

A 44-year-old learner from Melbourne who is working part-time and looking to change her career.

> *"Through this diploma, I will develop a strong foundation for further bachelor study. By gaining formal qualifications, I will be better prepared for professional roles and long-term career growth."*

Meet Siobahn

A 30-year-old learner from NSW. With an incomplete bachelor degree, she's looking to study to change her career.

> *"This course is a stepping-stone toward becoming a Registered Nurse. I'm a qualified beauty therapist, but I need to expand my knowledge and move into a more clinical pathway."*

Source: New Student Goal Setting Reflection, 2025

CONSIDERATION

634k

Program page views in 2025

380,000 were undergraduate

26k

Student Interest in 2025

14,000 were undergraduate

213

programs

48 UG and 165 PG

Source: OUA page view and interest data (GoodData) Nov 24-25. Program listings include retired programs (Oct 24 to Nov 25)

Strong engagement signals

Health demonstrates strong engagement, with aspiring learners actively exploring both single subjects and degree options.

Volume of page views grew overall by 1% driven by postgraduate level (10% growth).

At the postgraduate level, the biggest uplifts were driven by:

- Other Health (+68%)
- Medical Studies (+13%)
- Complementary Therapies (+14%)

At the undergraduate level, growth was focused on:

- Medical Studies (+53%)
- Pharmacy (+5%)

Student interest was mixed. Medical studies (+47%) leads undergraduate growth. In postgraduate, Nursing remains strong, with growth in:

- Complementary Therapies (+8%)
- Other Health (+56%)
- Medical studies (+13%)
- Rehabilitation Therapies (+3%)

Spotlight on Nursing

While postgraduate had a stronger year in terms of growth, demand is higher at the undergraduate level, despite undergraduate programs representing only 19% of the portfolio.

The pattern differs in Nursing. Nursing demand is strong at the postgraduate level; it is the largest narrow field in terms of total page views and interest, but we also have many programs at this level for nurses wanting to advance their career.

Engagement metrics are lower for undergraduate Nursing, but this is influenced strongly by a current lack of programs on offer.

This suggests that current engagement patterns are being driven as much by program availability as by demand, with clear potential to unlock undergraduate growth through expanded offerings.

ENROLLING

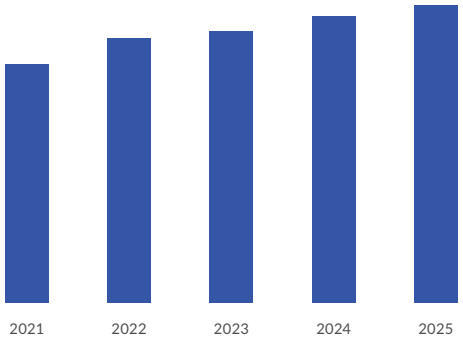
3%
Growth in Health single subject and degree commencements

Undergraduate stable

32%
Postgraduate growth

Growth within an already strong field

Health remains one of the largest Fields by enrolment volume, with combined single subject and degree commencements increasing by 3%. Growth was strongest for narrow Fields such as Nursing and Pharmacy.



We are seeing demand for flexible entry and progression

A 6% increase in undergraduate single subject commencements, alongside growth across all full postgraduate qualification levels suggests aspiring learners are seeking both flexible entry points and opportunities for structured progression. While postgraduate growth has occurred broadly, increases have been particularly strong at the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma level, reflecting demand for shorter-form qualifications aligned to upskilling and career advancement.

The popularity of undergraduate certificates, representing 33% of enrolments, underscores their role as a critical pathway into degree study for the types of students Open Universities Australia attracts.

EQUITY SPOTLIGHT

Equity commencements* in Health grew by a larger proportion than the non-equity student cohort.

Reinforcing Open Universities Australia's role in enabling participation among underrepresented learners, 42% are equity students.

Source: Enrolments, 2025 Academic year, Degree and Single Subject Commencements.
* Excludes enrolments from Lead Referral partners.

ACCESS LED OPPORTUNITIES

Demand in Health remains strong, but participation patterns differ across learner cohorts and stage of study. Postgraduate study continues to represent a significant area of engagement, particularly among employed professionals seeking career advancement and specialisation. However, participation at earlier stages of the learner journey remains more constrained due to limited entry-level pathways. This reflects broader workforce and tertiary education trends, where many learners enter health professions through vocational education before seeking to upskill, specialise or transition into higher education over time. Growing professionalisation across sectors such as Aged Care and Disability is also increasing demand for qualifications that support career progression and formal recognition.

The opportunity to strengthen participation across the Health Field lies in supporting learners at multiple stages of their education journey, including those returning to study or building on VET qualifications. This can include expanding flexible, undergraduate entry options such as undergraduate certificates and pathway-aligned programs, alongside clearer credit recognition opportunities.

Add UGC in Nursing Foundations

Strong search demand for the Bachelor of Nursing, combined with high interest in pathway-level study, highlights an opportunity to expand access in this area. Undergraduate certificates could serve as flexible entry pathways into on-campus degrees, supporting broader participation in nursing study pathways aligned to workforce demand.

Scale single subjects in emerging areas

Early demand signals are evident across select disciplines, including Exercise & Sport Science, Occupational Therapy, Social Work, Paramedicine and Nutrition. While volumes remain smaller, these represent opportunities to test and expand access through single subject offerings.

Offer entry-level pathway in Mental Health

Strong growth in Mental Health search demand (+25%) highlights increasing learner focus in this area.

This opportunity is heightened due to the crossover of relevance between Health and Society and Culture.



AN ACCESS EXPANSION OPPORTUNITY

MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE

Management and Commerce is a large, mature Field with strong early-stage demand, particularly at the postgraduate level. Search behaviour is highly concentrated in career-led areas such as Commerce, Finance, Leadership, Marketing, and MBA. However, this demand is not consistently translating into enrolment, with overall commencements declining despite pockets of growth. High program volume suggests choice is not the constraint, but rather how learners access and progress into study. There is a clear opportunity to expand participation through more accessible pathways, particularly into postgraduate study.



EXPLORATION

Demand is concentrated in select areas

A large field with nearly 1,000 unique searches. The generic term Business continues to dominate the Field, contributing to overall growth of 6%. Other areas showing strong uplifts include:

- Commerce (+33%)
- Finance (+16%)
- Leadership (+49%)
- Marketing (15%)
- MBA (+32%)

Search terms demonstrate career led interest

Management and Commerce demand is characterised by both scale and concentration, with search activity heavily focused across a defined set of disciplines.

Unlike other Fields where demand is spread wider, the top 10 thematic categories account for over 90% of total searches, showing that demand is concentrated in established areas such as Business, Management, Accounting and Finance.

The strong growth in high volume areas such as Leadership, Commerce, and Marketing signals increasing interest in specialist skill-based business disciplines.

TOP 10 CATEGORIES OF SEARCH TERMS



297k

Volume of searches on open.edu.au in 2025

6%

Growth in volume of searches year-on-year

Source: Searches on open.edu.au, 2025 Calendar year

Meet James

A 42-year-old learner from WA studying Accounting. VET qualified, he wants to cement his skills to progress.

> *I want qualifications that match my experience and allow me to pursue senior roles and work internationally.*

Meet Vaughan

An 18-year-old from VIC studying an undergraduate certificate as a pathway into a full degree.

> *This course will help me transfer into my dream university course despite my ATAR limitation from year 12.*

Source: New Student Goal Setting Reflection, 2025

CONSIDERATION

532k

Program page views in 2025

324,000 were undergraduate

16k

Student Interest in 2025

8,900 were undergraduate

329

programs*

133 UG and 196 PG

Source: PPV and SI November 2024 – November 2025 Listings Performance GoodData, Program listings include retired programs (Oct 24 to Nov 25)

Strong core demand with mixed performance across disciplines

Although initial interest is strong, engagement across Management and Commerce is uneven, with sustained volume in Business and Management and growth in Banking and Finance, and Tourism.

Declines in areas such as Sales and Marketing, and Other Management and Commerce, appear linked in part to reduced program availability, highlighting the role of portfolio dynamics in shaping both visibility and demand.

A field with high program volumes

Although there was a reduction in listing volumes, particularly at the postgraduate level, program volumes at both undergraduate and postgraduate are still high, with much variety and choice for aspiring students.

ENROLLING

-8% ↓

Decline in Management and Commerce single subject and degree commencements

-9% ↓

Undergraduate decline

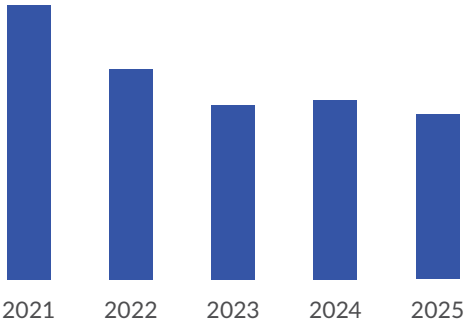
9% ↑

Postgraduate growth

Enrolments remain high, with mixed trends

Despite more postgraduate offerings available, most enrolments are for undergraduate programs

Overall new commencements declined by 8%. This was driven by undergraduate softness in areas such as Accounting. Postgraduate study continued to show growth (+9%).



Many aspiring students are leveraging study for career advancement and recognition. Single subjects are often used to validate and extend existing experience and are the most common starting point.

However, 8% of new to Open Universities Australia commencements in this Field enter directly into bachelor degrees, giving Management and Commerce one of the highest levels of direct degree commencements. This suggests current pathways are meeting the demands of aspiring students.

EQUITY SPOTLIGHT

Equity students account for 39% of enrolments in Management and Commerce, the lowest proportion across all Fields.*

Source: Enrolments, 2025 Academic year, Degree and Single Subject Commencements.

* Excludes enrolments from Lead Referral partners.

ACCESS LED OPPORTUNITIES

Postgraduate demand earlier in the funnel remains strong, with pockets of growth across views, interest and enrolments. However, overall volumes remain small relative to undergraduate demand, despite a large number of postgraduate programs available.

This imbalance suggests that access, rather than demand, is a key constraint. Open access options such as single subjects are likely to resonate with aspiring postgraduate learners seeking flexible pathways into career-led study.

We suggest open access pathways such as single subjects would resonate with aspiring postgraduate students looking to access these career-led study options.

Department of Education data indicates that the online postgraduate market is larger than undergraduate in this field, reinforcing the opportunity to better align access with underlying demand.

With this in mind, we are encouraging partners to explore new approaches that expand access for aspiring learners with practical experience seeking postgraduate study options.

Offer postgraduate open access single subjects and pathways

Building on the success of Open Access Single Subjects at the undergraduate level, there is opportunity to partner and pilot similar offerings to test new pathways into postgraduate study.

AN ACCESS EXPANSION OPPORTUNITY

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Society and Culture shows strong and steady demand, with growth emerging in areas such as Law, Criminology, Mental Health, Social Work and Economics. Engagement remains high, and while there was a slight decline in overall enrolments, this was driven by a decline in Behavioural Science. Demand and enrolment is strongly connected to programs with flexible entry formats such as single subjects and undergraduate certificates. Expanding pathway options in high-demand areas including Law and Mental Health presents a clear opportunity to increase participation and support progression into full qualifications.



EXPLORATION

Growing demand in pockets

Society and Culture is the dominant field, attracting the largest share of searches but search behaviour is varied, with demand distributed across a broad range of disciplines.

Marketplace searches increased by 6% year-on-year, with high-volume areas such as Psychology and Law continuing to attract the largest share of searches.

Growth is highest in areas including:

- Law (+6%)
- Criminology (+24%)
- Mental Health (+26%)
- Social Work (+27%)
- Economics (+26%)
- History (+9%)

This pattern indicates steady underlying interest in established disciplines, alongside increasing demand in workforce-relevant areas.

TOP 10 CATEGORIES OF SEARCH TERMS



746k

Volume of Society & Culture searches on open.edu.au in 2025

6%

Growth in volume of searches year-on-year

Source: Searches on open.edu.au, 2025 Calendar year

Meet Lesley

A 38-year-old learner from QLD, works full-time and studying a PG degree

> *I want a recognised counselling qualification so I can upskill in my current role, gain eligibility for ACA registration, and eventually transition into a counselling role.*

Meet Sim

A 32-year-old learner from VIC. PG qualified, she is looking to upskill through a single subject.

> *To understand more about HR Law and compliance and expand my knowledge to gain better career opportunities.*

Source: New Student Goal Setting Reflection, 2025

CONSIDERATION

1.6m

Program page views in 2025

324,000 were undergraduate

16k

Student Interest in 2025

8,900 were undergraduate

329

programs*

133 UG and 196 PG

Source: PPV and SI November 2024 – November 2025 Listings Performance GoodData, Program listings include retired programs (Oct 24 to Nov 25)

Strong core demand with mixed performance across disciplines

Although initial interest is strong, engagement across Management and Commerce is uneven, with sustained volume in Business and Management and growth in Banking and Finance, and Tourism.

Declines in areas such as Sales and Marketing, and Other Management and Commerce, appear linked in part to reduced program availability, highlighting the role of portfolio dynamics in shaping both visibility and demand.

A field with high program volumes

Although there was a reduction in listing volumes, particularly at the postgraduate level, program volumes at both undergraduate and postgraduate are still high, with much variety and choice for aspiring students.



ENROLLING

-3%
Decline in Society and Culture single subject and degree commencements

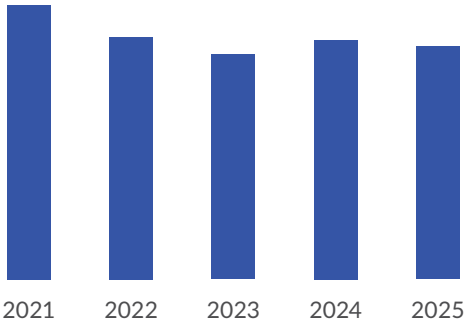
-3%
Undergraduate decline

-6%
Postgraduate decline

Enrolments remain high, with mixed trends

Enrolments were broadly stable across the field, with a modest decline of 3%. This movement was largely driven by a decrease in Behavioural Science, which represents 14% of total enrolments and therefore has a disproportionate impact on overall trends.

In contrast, Law recorded strong growth despite constrained choice, with most undergraduate enrolments currently concentrated to a single offering.



Entry-level study dominates commencements

Overall new commencements in Society and Culture are primarily through single subjects and undergraduate certificates, reflecting learner preference for flexible, lower-barrier entry.

Source: Enrolments, 2025 Academic year, Degree and Single Subject Commencements.

* Excludes enrolments from Lead Referral partners.

EQUITY SPOTLIGHT

One in two new commencements in Society and Culture are from equity cohorts.*

ACCESS LED OPPORTUNITIES

Demand is strong where access and choice are most constrained. These opportunities focus on expanding flexible entry pathways to increase access and support progression into degree study.

Add Undergraduate Law with flexible entry

Strong demand for Law programs, and limited undergraduate offerings, presents an opportunity to introduce more choice, especially with flexible entry options.

This would help support broader access to Law study through more flexible progression options.

Offer Entry-level pathway in Mental Health

Strong growth in Mental Health search demand (+26%) highlights increasing learner focus in this area.

Given its relevance across Social Work, Counselling, and Teaching, Mental Health presents an opportunity to provide aspiring learners with more program choice, especially those that articulate into multiple degree options.

OPTIMISATION OPPORTUNITIES

What follows is a closer look at the opportunities within Fields where current offerings are already well aligned to demand. Supported by key data points and practical insights, these analyses highlight where partners can drive stronger performance by refining how programs are positioned, communicated and accessed.



AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL AND RELATED STUDIES



What We're Seeing

A small, niche Field where early-stage demand remains present, but performance weakens through the funnel. There was growth in search volumes across the marketplace, but Agriculture had the smallest share of all ten Fields.

While marketplace searches showed modest growth, interest volumes overall declined, and while average interest per listing had some small growth, this was connected to a softening of programs available on the marketplace during the year.

Enrolments were down overall, with greater softness at the postgraduate level, indicating demand is not fully translating into outcomes.

Acknowledging demand is softer than previous years, this Field remains important for participation, with equity students making up 54%* of net degree commencements.

Implication

With existing portfolio coverage across this niche Field, current demand dynamics suggest growth is unlikely to come from new programs. The priority is improving conversion through clearer positioning, simplified entry, and stronger pathways.

DEMAND INDICATORS

Marketplace search

Low growth and low demand

Listings volume

Low

Interest per listing and volume

Low growth and low volume

Enrolments

High decline

Source: Enrolments, 2025 Academic Year.
*Excludes enrolments from Lead Referral partners

KEY COLOURS

- Low
- Medium/moderate
- High

ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDING

What We're Seeing

Marketplace searches had moderate growth relative to other Fields but remained the lowest of all Fields. Page views and interest were declining, and single subject and degree commencement enrolments had the largest drop of any field. This is most pronounced at the undergraduate level where long, inflexible pathways to the workforce and limited alignment with entry-level job opportunities are likely contributing to reduced momentum.

Equity students make up 40%* of enrolments in Architecture and Building. Of these, nearly half are women in non-traditional areas (WINTA). Participation declined at a slower rate than the overall cohort reinforcing the field's role in supporting access for these learners.

Implication

Given structural and economic constraints, growth in Architecture is more likely to come from improving conversion and enhancing flexible or modular entry points, rather than broad undergraduate expansion.

Opportunities may exist through targeted portfolio refreshment and subject-level innovation aligned to evolving industry and professional needs, including sustainability, emerging technologies and continuing professional development requirements. This approach supports industry relevance while strengthening performance within existing offerings.

DEMAND INDICATORS

Marketplace search

Low growth and low demand

Listings volume

Low

Interest per listing and volume

Moderate volumes and low decline

Enrolments

High decline

CREATIVE ARTS

What We're Seeing

Initial search is growing but demand is softening at the undergraduate level, reflected in weakening enrolments. This may be driven by a shift in learner behaviour, with aspiring learners increasingly favouring shorter, skills-based pathways such as single subjects over full degrees, alongside ongoing uncertainty around career outcomes and job stability.

There is emerging growth in postgraduate study, however, this growth is from a low base and not sufficient to offset broader declines.

Equity learners represent more than half of enrolments in Creative Arts 54%*, with participation holding more steadily than the non-equity student cohort.

Implication

A mid-sized field where undergraduate engagement continues to soften. Given the current portfolio, there is limited scale to support expansion and focus should remain on supporting existing offerings and monitoring growth trends.

DEMAND INDICATORS

Marketplace search

Moderate growth and moderate demand

Listings volume

Medium

Interest per listing and volume

Moderate decline and moderate volume

Enrolments

Moderate decline

Source: Enrolments, 2025 Academic Year.
*Excludes enrolments from Lead Referral partners

EDUCATION

What We're Seeing

Early demand remains steady across Education, reflecting its ongoing scale and appeal, but is increasingly concentrated around Early Childhood and Primary Teaching. This pattern reinforces that aspiring learner demand may be shaped by program accessibility, rather than purely by workforce need.

Undergraduate enrolments are softening driven by Curriculum and Education, while postgraduate study continues to attract growth. A highlight is the growth in Teacher Education suggesting a shift toward upskilling and career progression, as well as those looking to change careers.

Although, equity learners make up 47%* of enrolments in Education, the non-equity student cohort is more stable.

Implication

As a mature and high-volume field, the priority remains sustaining performance and supporting existing pathways. However, future growth depends on making pathways into teaching more accessible, particularly in Secondary teaching and specialist subjects where workforce shortages remain high.

DEMAND INDICATORS

Marketplace search

Low growth and moderate demand

Listings volume

Medium

Interest per listing and volume

Low growth and high volume

Enrolments

Low decline

Source: Enrolments, 2025 Academic Year.
*Excludes enrolments from Lead Referral partners



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

What We're Seeing

A Field with lots of program choice, however strong early-stage curiosity is not translating into sustained engagement or enrolment, with declines in page views, student interest and enrolments across both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The dominance of single-subject commencements reinforces a preference for skills-based learning rather than full program enrolment.

Limited growth is emerging at postgraduate level, with enrolments growing, although from a low base.

Noteworthy is the growth in searches relating to Artificial Intelligence. While this area doesn't attract the volume of searches compared to the top category of Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence searches grew 73% compared to only 1.5% growth for Cybersecurity.

Implication

Traditional program-based growth in IT is likely to remain constrained. Opportunity lies in aligning with evolving learner behaviour through modular, based offerings, supported by clearer connections between study, career outcomes, and in-demand specialist roles such as Cybersecurity.

The continued growth of industry certifications and shorter-form learning also highlights increasing demand for more flexible and connected learning pathways. Strengthening recognition of prior learning, and creating clearer progression between industry credentials and formal qualifications, may help to capture learners seeking targeted upskilling alongside long-term career mobility.

DEMAND INDICATORS

Marketplace search

Moderate growth and low demand

Listings volume

Medium

Interest per listing and volume

Moderate decline and low volume

Enrolments

Moderate decline



NATURAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

What We're Seeing

There was growth in early-stage interest and overall enrolments in Natural and Physical Sciences. We see this mainly in single subject new commencements, especially those relating to Anatomy or Mathematics, which are often a requirement of degrees in other Fields.

Implication

Although demand signals are positive, growth in traditional undergraduate science programs is likely to remain limited. We believe the current programs on offer are adequate to meet aspiring student needs in this field.

Focus should be on strengthening undergraduate pathways such as interdisciplinary single subjects which link to adjacent Fields such as Health, Psychology or Technology.

DEMAND INDICATORS

Marketplace search

Strong growth and moderate volumes

Listings volume

Low

Interest per listing and volume

High growth and high volume

Enrolments

Low growth



OPTIMISATIONS FOR ALL FIELDS OF EDUCATION

To ensure programs across all Fields of Education align with the needs and preferences of the aspiring learners Open Universities Australia attracts, the full portfolio can benefit from evolution in a few key areas. These shifts will play a critical role in enabling participation, particularly for learners who may otherwise not take the first step into higher education.

Open Universities Australia's Partner Success team can work collaboratively with partners to identify opportunities across portfolio design, learner pathways and program positioning to better align offerings with evolving learner expectations and participation trends. For more information contact your Partner Success Manager.



1 ENSURE COURSE INFORMATION SUPPORTS CONFIDENT DECISION MAKING

Key recommendations:

Improve reader comprehension

- Plain language – avoid jargon
- Short sentences and bullet points

Help students differentiate

- Showcase unique selling points
- Highlight key information

Use active, aspirational language

- Active voice: “XYZ will equip you…”
- Start with verbs: “Gain the skills…”

We encourage our partners to review and audit program content regularly to ensure course information supports confident learner decision making. Open Universities Australia teams can provide guidance on learner behaviour, content optimisation and best practice approaches that support stronger engagement.

2 INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY VIA SCHEDULING AND PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Flexible program design plays a key role in helping learners start sooner and continue with confidence. When study options are structured around real-life constraints, learners are more likely to take the first step and stay on track.

This flexibility is supported through accessible formats such as open access single subjects, undergraduate certificates, diplomas, and graduate certificates and diplomas. These provide lower-barrier entry points and more adaptable pathways into higher education.

Offer multiple entry points

Offering several entry points and scheduling core subjects throughout the year allows learners to begin when they’re ready, rather than delaying study due to rigid intake structures. More frequent entry points can also help learners maintain momentum as they progress through their study journey.

Create flexible program structures

Designing core subjects that support non-sequential completion, alongside choice-driven electives and majors, gives learners greater control over what and when they study. Flexible structures can also better support part-time learners and those returning to study after time away from education.

Reviewing scheduling models, progression rules and pathway structures can help reduce participation barriers and improve learner retention across a broader range of student cohorts.

3 SIMPLIFY ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Clear and accessible entry requirements are essential for helping learners feel confident about starting study. The learners Open Universities Australia attracts often engage differently, balancing work, family and other commitments, and many are exploring university for the first time rather than coming straight from school.

Complex or unclear admissions criteria can create unnecessary friction during decision making, particularly for learners returning to study or navigating non-traditional education pathways. Simplifying how entry options are communicated can improve accessibility and help more learners see a realistic pathway into higher education.

Explain accessible entry points

Ensuring entry criteria is clear and transparent can reduce perceived barriers and make it easier for learners to take that first step.

Support non-traditional study journeys

Offering and clearly communicating program structures that support part-time and non-linear study journeys gives aspiring learners the flexibility to engage with study in a way that aligns with their work, family and financial circumstances.

Reviewing how entry requirements and pathway options are communicated can help reduce participation barriers and improve learner confidence at the point of decision making.



SUMMARY OF ACCESS EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

Field	Opportunity	Recommendation
Engineering and Related Technologies	Fill program gaps in high demand areas	Add programs to capture growing demand in Mechanical, Civil, and Electrical Engineering.
Engineering and Related Technologies	Introduce generic foundation entry level programs	Offer undergraduate certificates and pathways into degree level courses.
Engineering and Related Technologies	Scale open access single subjects	Provide options for students who are not ready for full degrees. Single subjects that articulate into multiple degrees and bridging subjects in areas such as mathematics would enable students to access study related to their desired career.
Health	Add Undergraduate Certificate in Nursing Foundations	Introduce an undergraduate certificate as a flexible entry pathway into on-campus degrees.
Health	Offer entry-level pathway in Mental Health	Capture increasing learner focus in this area.
Health	Scale single subjects in emerging areas	Introduce single subjects in Exercise and Sport Science, Occupational Therapy, Social Work, Paramedicine, and Nutrition.
Management and Commerce	Offer postgraduate open access single subjects and pathways	Test new pathways into postgraduate study.
Society and Culture	Add undergraduate law with flexible entry	Introduce more choice and support broader access to Law study.
Society and Culture	Offer entry-level pathway in mental health	Capture increasing learner focus in this area.

ABOUT OPEN UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

OUR UNIQUE VALUE

Open Universities Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to empower every learner to confidently access the education that's right for them regardless of background, location or prior study experience.

OPEN UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

#1
National brand for searching and comparing online university options

6M
Marketplace sessions per year

80k
Enrolments supported per year

543k+
Total students in 30+ years

Founded in 1993 as a government initiative to widen participation and expand access to higher education beyond the limits of traditional entry models, we are built on the following belief:

Education has the power to transform lives.

By increasing access to education, we believe we can deliver lasting social and economic impact.

At the time of publication, more than 60% of Australia's leading universities partner with us, using our platform to reach learners beyond traditional catchments and build sustainable pipelines into award programs. Notably, 77% of the students Open Universities Australia attracts choose to enrol in universities outside of their home state. We offer:

- national choice and flexibility, giving learners access to thousands of subjects and hundreds of degrees, with FEE-HELP available for those wanting to study single subjects. This supports partner universities to connect with learners across Australia beyond traditional recruitment markets
- free, unbiased advise through our Australia-based student advisory team, helping learners make informed decisions while supporting stronger engagement and conversion outcomes for partners
- support making complex enrolment decisions, especially for those who would otherwise find the higher education system difficult to navigate. This enables partner universities to access expanding participation among mature-age, equity and non-traditional cohorts

OPEN ACCESS: OUR DEFINING STRENGTH

Open Access empowers students to start with a single subject using FEE-HELP, without entry requirements.

Most students start with Open Universities Australia via an open access pathway model that plays a distinctive role in expanding participation. This entry point helps partners build pipelines of university-ready students, and our national scale makes Open Access a system-wide pathway.

Our non-exclusive model is designed for flexibility. It complements your direct channels, integrates smoothly with existing OPM partnerships, and does not compete with traditional school-leaver markets.

This model is particularly effective for universities seeking to extend their reach beyond traditional geographic catchments, engage mature-age and learners from equity cohorts, and connect with students who may be hesitant to enter higher education through conventional pathways. Open Universities Australia's national scale also provides unique insight into emerging patterns of online learner demand and participation behaviour across Australia.

APPENDIX

Data sources used in this report

The data sources used throughout this report reflect different stages of the learner journey and varying levels of behavioural commitment. Early-stage indicators such as search activity signal exploration and interest, while engagement and enrolment metrics provide progressively stronger indicators of active consideration and realised demand. No single dataset fully captures student intent; instead, these sources are used together to build a more comprehensive view of student demand.

Unless stated otherwise, all data presented in this report relates to 2025.

1. Exploring Options

Learners are discovering areas of interest.

Signal/Metric	What it Measures	Why it Matters	Source	Notes/Limitations
Search Trends (SEO)	External search behaviour for fields of study	Indicates underlying market demand and emerging learner interest	Google search data	Reflects search intent, not enrolment behaviour
Marketplace Searches	Searches conducted on open.edu.au	Indicates active exploration of study options	Open Universities Australia marketplace data	Influenced by platform navigation and seasonality
Market Sizing	Size of domestic student populations by discipline	Provides context on overall market scale	Department of Education (Domestic Students 2024)	Historic snapshot rather than forward-looking demand
Employment Projections	Forecast growth in occupations and industries	Connects study interest to labour market outcomes	Jobs and Skills Australia	Long-term forecasts subject to economic change
Equity Sizing – Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES)	Participation and equity population insights	Highlights underserved learner cohorts and anchors Open Universities Australia numbers in national market	ACSES interactive tool	Proxy for participation opportunity rather than direct demand

2. Comparing and Considering

Learners are evaluating providers, qualifications and study pathways.

Signal/Metric	What it Measures	Why it Matters	Source	Notes/Limitations
Award Type Interest	Interest across qualification types and levels	Reveals shifts in learner intent and qualification preference	Open Universities Australia marketplace data	Reflects browsing behaviour, not commitment
Program Page Views (PPV)	Volume of views on program pages	Indicates visibility and active consideration	Open Universities Australia marketplace data	High volume does not necessarily indicate high intent
Student Interest (SI)	Engagement actions associated with programs	Signals depth and quality of engagement	Open Universities Australia marketplace data	Signals high intent
Live Chat Interactions	Conversations with Open Universities Australia Student Advisory service	Indicates uncertainty, reassurance needs, or high purchase intent	Open Universities Australia Student Advisory service data	Represents only learners seeking direct support
Portfolio Listings	Availability of programs and subjects	Defines the learner choice set	Open Universities Australia portfolio listings data	Supply-side measure rather than demand indicator

3. Choosing and Enrolling

Learners are committing to study and commencing learning.

Signal/Metric	What it Measures	Why it Matters	Source	Notes/Limitations
New degree and single subject commencements	New student enrolments into programs or subjects	Represents realised demand	Open Universities Australia enrolment data	Full Service and Lead Referral enrolments are included
Award Type Mix	Distribution of enrolments by qualification type	Indicates changing study preferences and commitment levels	Open Universities Australia enrolment data	Reflects enrolled students only (Full Service and Lead Referral)
Single Subject Enrolments	Uptake of standalone subjects	Highlights pathway and access-led participation	Open Universities Australia enrolment data	Full Service enrolments only. Lead Referral partners do not offer single subjects through Open Universities Australia
Goal setting	Learner decision making	Showcases student program choice	New Student Goal Setting Reflection, 2025	Self-nominated responses

OPEN UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

Contact us

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