Impact & Outcomes

Arts, Social Sciences & Humanities in Australia

December 2026

dassh
Promoting the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities acknowledges the First Nations peoples on whose unceded lands we live, work and share knowledge. We pay our particular respects to Indigenous ways of knowing and we recognise the ongoing barriers to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

We recognise the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples as the custodians of the Country upon which this report was written. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and the Elders of all nations on whose lands our member institutions are based.



Sqaure Rock, Namadgi National Park
Ngunnuwal and Ngmabri Country
Image credit: weareexplorers.co

About DASSH

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities represents more than 350 Deans, Pro Vice-Chancellors, Heads of School Associate and Deputy Deans from 42 universities across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Our members lead schools that are home to students, researchers, professional and academic staff in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities.

We advocate for our disciplines, produce research and policy submissions, and engage with government, members and colleagues in Australia and around the world. DASSH is a hub for members, with networking and professional development events held throughout the year.

Our purpose is to build sector leadership capacity and shape public policy debate.

Our Pillars



- **Collaborative**
- **Influential**
- **Connected**
- **Knowledgable**

In Brief:
Impact & Outcomes

Enrolments

Enrolment levels have remained steady. The Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities are **preferred areas for students.** Our disciplines have the largest cohort of First Nations students.

Student experience

Both undergraduate and postgraduate Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities students rate their student experience very highly. In 2025, Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences postgraduates had **the highest rating across all study areas** for overall educational experience.

Skills and Employability

Shifts in the labour market are leading to changes in the employability skills landscape. Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences **graduates' strong adapative, collaboration and technical skills** are ensuring their continued employability.

HASS for the future

The Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities will be **key to building Australia's climate resilience**. Research from diverse disciplines is already shaping knowledge bases, adaptations and strategies.

Methodology

The Higher Education data sets use EFTSL (equivalent full-time student load) data rather than headcount (number of students). This is the standard data used across the sector.

Data collected from Higher Education statistics is classified by 21 study areas according to the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ACSED). Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines are most commonly included within the Society and Culture field of education, along with Creative Arts as its own distinct field.

Some Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines may also be counted in other fields of education depending on their internal university classification. Disciplines including Law and Behavioural Science contribute towards the statistics of Society and Culture. These categorisations do not map neatly onto all institutional structures.

For non-First Nations data from the Higher Education Statistics, the numbers given are for undergraduate, postgraduate coursework and postgraduate research enrolments only.

Data collected from Quality Indicators for Teaching and Learning is classified to 45 study areas also in concordance with ACSED. Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities data is collected from the Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences classification. Communications and Creative Arts are considered separate classifications.

All figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Naarm | Melbourne city skyline
Wurundjeri Country
Image credit: publicdomainpictures

Field of Education Structure and Definitions,
Australian Standard Classification of Education,
Australian Bureau of Statistics

Enrolments

Undergraduate

Society and Culture is a preferred study area for undergraduate students.

In 2025, Society and Culture had the highest enrolment of any study area at a Bachelor level.

Enrolments in Society and Culture and Creative Arts comprised **23% of enrolments** across undergraduate and postgraduate. This is on par with Managment and Commerce (22%).

Postgraduate

Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities graduates are committed to ongoing learning as rates of further study remain high.

Society and Culture has consistently been the second-largest cohort of all postgraduate coursework and research enrolments since 2021.

Society and Culture continues to be a preferred study area for overseas postgraduate students. Between 2020 and 2025, **overseas Society and Culture postgraduate coursework enrolments more than doubled**, increasing by 54%. Overseas postgraduate research enrolments in both Society and Culture and Creative Arts programs have increased year-on-year since 2022.

Preliminary Trends in Higher Education | Enrolments , 2025
Department of Education

Gender diversity

Society and Culture is a popular area of study for women and gender diverse people.

In 2025, **22% of female and gender diverse undergraduate and postgraduate students were studying Society and Culture** programs. This is second after Health (23%).

First Nations

Twenty-nine per cent of First Nations students were enrolled in Society and Culture courses in 2025. This is the largest cohort across all study areas. This compares with Health (24%) and Education (14%).



Desert Fringe-rush seed dreaming
Nola Napangardi Wilson Fisher

Selected Higher Education Statistics - 2025 student data, Department of Education

Undergraduate student experience

Undergraduate students rate their university experience very highly.

In 2025, 79% of Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences undergraduates rated their overall educational experience positively. Creative Arts and Communications were also highly rated at 78% and 77% respectively. These study areas were at or above average (77%).

Creative Arts was rated 85% for teaching quality and learning experience. Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences were also rated highly (84%). These were well above the average (81%).

Language and Literature was the highest rated of all 45 study areas. Ninety-one per cent of Language and Literature students gave a positive rating for teaching quality and engagement.



National Library of Australia
Ngunnuwal and Ngmabri Country
Image credit: Enlighten Festival

2025 Student Experience Survey,
Quality Indicators for Teaching and Learning

Postgraduate student experience

Postgraduate Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities students are highly satisfied with their studies.

In 2025, Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences postgraduates had the **highest rating across all study areas** for **overall educational experience at 85%**. Communications (80%) was also above average of 79%.

Postgraduate Humanities, Culture and Social Science students rated their **learning resources the most highly of all disciplines**, with a **91% positive rating.** Communications (91%) was second-highest. Creative Arts was also above average (86%).

Teaching quality and engagement is outstanding. Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences postgraduates ranked it **the highest of any discipline at 91%.** Communications ranked a close second at 88%. Creative Arts 87% was also above average (84%).

Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences (87%), Communications (86%) and Creative Arts (85%) postgraduates all rated their skill development above average (84%). This was on par with Engineering (85%) and Nursing (85%).

2025 Student Experience Survey,
Quality Indicators for Teaching and Learning

2026: The skills landscape

The three skills most in shortage in Australia are **active listening**, **critical thinking** and **reading comprehension**.

– *Skills for Jobs*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

"Improving productivity in jobs will depend on workers being supported to **adapt**, **solve problems** and **apply judgement** as technology changes the nature of work."

– *Jobs and Skills Report 2026*, Jobs and Skills Australia

The Core Skills of 2030 will be:

- **Creative thinking**
- **Analytic thinking**
- **Resilience, flexibility and agility**
- **Motivation and self-awareness**
- **Systems thinking**
- **Empathy and active listening**

– *New Economy Skills: Unlocking the Human Advantage*, World Economic Forum

Munga-Thirri | Simpson Desert
Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Country
Image credit: Australian Geographic

Employer satisfaction

Employers report high levels of satisfaction with Creative Arts and Society and Culture graduates and their skills.

Adaptive skills

91%
Creative Arts

93%
Society and Culture

Collaborative skills

91%
Creative Arts

90%
Society and Culture

Technical skills

91%
Creative Arts

93%
Society and Culture

2025 Employer Satisfaction Survey.
Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching

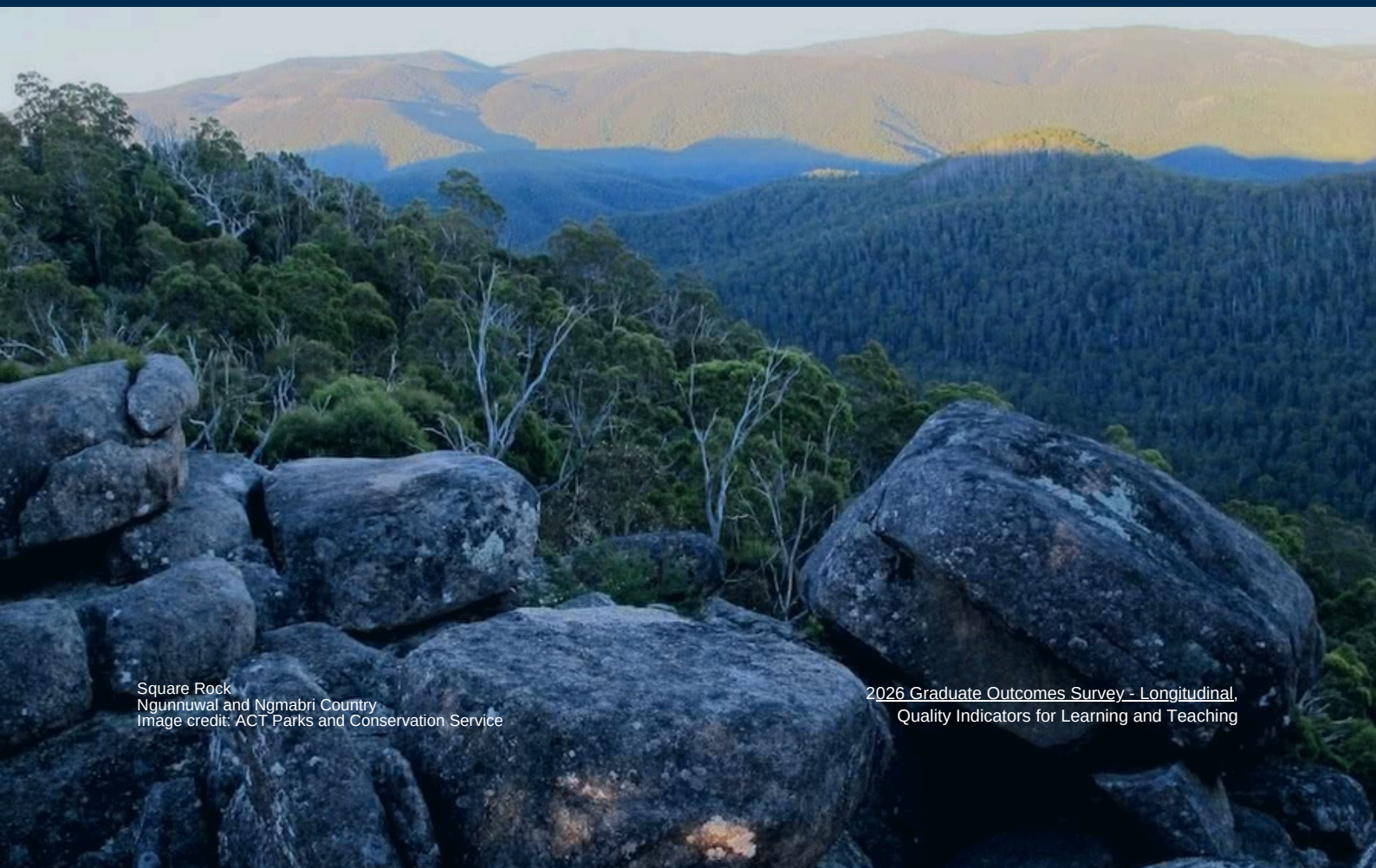
Employability

Studying the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities leads to positive employment outcomes.

In 2026, 89% of Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences Bachelor graduates were in full-time employment within three years of graduating. This is on par with Science and Mathematics (90%) and Psychology (90%).

Ninety-five per cent of Political Science undergraduates and 89% of Humanities, History and Geography undergraduates are in full-time employment within three years of graduating.

Ninety-three per cent of Humanities, Culture and Social Sciences postgraduate coursework graduates are employed full-time within three years of graduating.



Square Rock
Ngunnuwal and Ngmabri Country
Image credit: ACT Parks and Conservation Service

2026 Graduate Outcomes Survey - Longitudinal, Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching

Emerging industry profile: Climate change resilience

Eighty-four per cent of Australians have been affected by at least one climate-fuelled disaster since 2019.

Developing climate resilience will require addressing social, economic and technological problems. Multidisciplinary approaches have a key role to play in building Australia's climate change resilience.

Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities knowledge and skills will shape the social and cultural dimensions of resilient responses that protect Country, people, infrastructure and the economy.



Climate Change Council - State of the Climate Report
Australian Trade and Investment Commission – Australian Green Economy Prospectus
Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia – Social Sciences for Australia's Future Report

Research profiles: Climate change resilience

Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities scholars are already working to secure Australia's climate resilience.

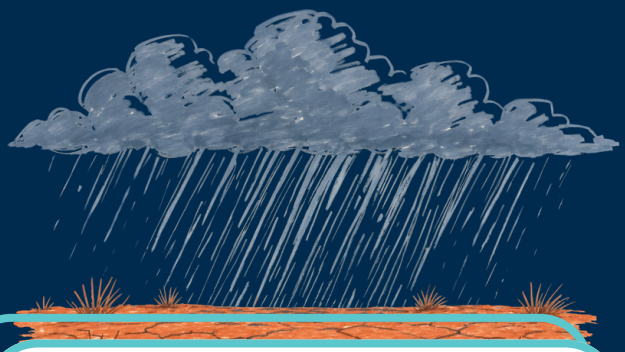
Human geographer Dr Chantel Carr investigates how frontline workers in Australia develop and apply practical knowledge about climate risks to support households and communities.



Anthropologist Associate Professor Annika Lems investigate why rural communities resist conservation efforts, focusing on how belonging and place ownership shape responses to environmental change.



Archaeologist Associate Professor Anna Kotarba is developing a Climate Heritage Resilience Framework for Indigenous Futures, to ensure that cultural heritage protection amid the climate crisis is proactive, rather than reactive.



Historian Dr Ruth Gamble is producing the world's first study of the Asia-Australian Monsoon Zone's 20th century energy transitions, to understand how unequal socio-ecological impacts hinder renewable adoption.



Performing Arts, Digital Media and Indigenous Studies researcher Dr Susanne Thurow will explore how immersive digital aesthetics can embody and make the human role in accelerating environmental change tangible.

Australian Research Council
Future Fellowships 2026
Discover Early Career Researcher Award 2026