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How partnering with OUA helps overall enrolment growth



September 2021



A modern-day challenge for universities: the University of New England's experience



UNE is one of the most experienced universities to offer “distance”, now known as “online”, education. In fact, the university pioneered teaching to external students by correspondence and continues to provide education opportunities for rural and regional people living outside of the big cities, especially within New South Wales.

Despite the university's success in offering programs online for years, their ability to attract students located outside of New South Wales was limited and considered an opportunity to grow. 60% of the university's current student cohort come from NSW.

UNE were interested in increasing their profile nationally and welcomed discussions with OUA to explore ways we could help.

77% of students who enrol through OUA study with a university located outside of their home state – allowing course content and reputation to eclipse concerns about location.



UNE wanted to attract new students by increasing their profile nationally.



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The decision to partner

Many universities across Australia have already joined the OUA marketplace to make their programs available to students across the country. UNE was initially apprehensive about joining OUA, as Professor Todd Walker, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor explains.

“In the past UNE had decided not to partner with OUA,” he said. Stakeholders at the university were worried that online enrolments through OUA could cannibalise the university’s direct enrolments for both on-campus and online.

“Although the [online] market as a whole is growing, we had seen enrolments into our Law program plateau, so we thought it would be great to test the waters by re-engaging our OUA partnership with this Law program” he explains. “OUA is an established organisation with a strong business model... I felt like it was a great opportunity, so when they reached out, I thought we should give it a go.”

First mover advantage

Whilst OUA already offered access to law programs at a postgraduate level, OUA had seen extensive demand from students for an online undergraduate program in law and was looking to fill a gap in its marketplace.

UNE recognised this gap and the opportunity to gain a first mover advantage and so made their Bachelor of Laws available to students via the OUA marketplace for commencement in T3 2018. Students were required to successfully complete a pathway of four Open Access subjects and achieve a GPA of 4.2 before being eligible to study the remaining subjects that make up the restricted degree program.

With so many students expressing interest in an undergraduate law program via OUA, this pathway provided students with the opportunity to make sure the Bachelor of Laws was right for them, as well as pursue a qualification which was not previously available to them. The GPA benchmark helped the university ensure OUA student's academic performance aligned with existing UNE students who had qualified for direct program entry with a higher level ATAR result.

The screenshot displays the Open Universities Australia website for the Bachelor of Laws program. The page includes the university logo, navigation links, and a search bar. The main content area features the program title, a description, and a video player. Below this, there is a 'Degree structure' section with a visual representation of the program's components: 24 Core subjects, 0 Major subjects, and 8 Elective subjects, totaling 32 subjects. The 'Degree details' section lists the learning outcomes for the program. On the right side, there is a sidebar with key program information: 'APPLY NOW', 'DOWNLOAD DEGREE GUIDE', 'SAVE', 'AVAILABLE LOANS' (Australian Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)), 'TOTAL SUBJECTS' (32), 'PRICE' (\$55,000), 'STUDY METHOD' (100% online), 'ASSESSMENTS' (100% online), 'CREDIT AVAILABLE' (checked), and 'APPLICATIONS CLOSE' (14 Jun 20 and 11 Oct 20).

The university's results

Since commencing with OUA, not only did UNE receive a significant number of OUA student enrolments, but the university also witnessed an increase in their direct enrolments as well.



“OUA has not only provided access to a market we otherwise couldn't get but our own enrolments have grown by around 9%”, said Professor Walker.

“At a unit level, we now have more students than ever before.” Professor Walker explains that “For us to achieve this on our own, we would have to double our marketing budget.”

When asked why he thought this had happened Professor Walker highlighted the importance of partnering with a digital brand that reaches all states of Australia. “(It's) due to the national marketing.” In partnering with OUA, Professor Walker believes UNE was able to extend their marketing reach further and target a different student audience.

“OUA has attracted a new type of student” Professor Walker explains. “60% of UNE students come from NSW, whereas 60–70% of our OUA students have come from outside of NSW.”

As UNE has demonstrated, partnering with OUA allows universities to further extend their national profile helping attract students they may not otherwise reach, without compromising traditional direct to university and on-campus enrolments.



A nice problem to have

Whilst technology and other market forces continue to shape the way universities deliver their programs, attracting new enrolments remains a constant challenge.

Partnering with OUA not only provided UNE with a new cohort of Open Access students, it also enabled UNE to reach students located outside of NSW.

However, the growth in student enrolments didn't come without its own challenges.



“The biggest challenge that comes with such rapid growth is staff resourcing, which is a great problem to have. Before partnering with OUA, the discussions were about how we were going to sustain the program, and now the discussions are about managing the growth” said Professor Walker.

Collaboration with OUA via Open Access

UNE valued the collaboration and access to market intelligence and national marketing campaigns which OUA could offer.

“OUA set strong foundations for collaboration,” explains Professor Walker which helped to “form an open, transparent partnership.” “The [OUA] team have understood our goals and desire to test things as we go and provided “market opportunities, access to intelligence and a viable funding model.”

OUA's goal is to make education more accessible by providing students with the ability to access study they may otherwise be unable to. One of the ways OUA does this is via Open Access or single subject enrolments which allow students to demonstrate success before pursuing a full degree program. OUA has a unique status within the Higher Education Support Act (HESA 2003) to provide access to FEE-HELP for students to study single subjects.

As an education marketplace, OUA offers students administrative support but plays no role in teaching and learning as this is managed and delivered by experts within the university.

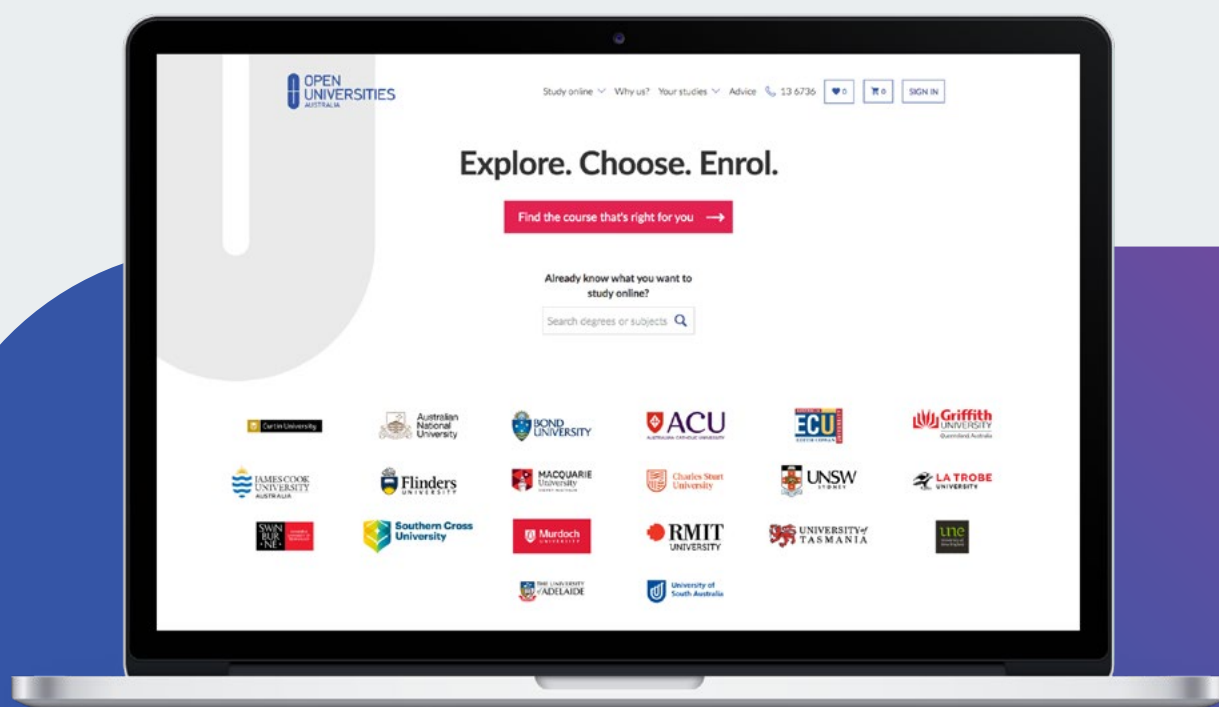
UNE wanted to preserve the university's CSP funding allocation and so chose to provide their Bachelor of Laws using OUA's Open Access agreement. This agreement allows UNE to grow enrolments beyond their existing CSP envelope. Students could access OUA's FEE-HELP support which offers the opportunity for them to demonstrate their capability and commitment to succeed, before being eligible to continue to study the remaining subjects in the restricted degree program. Reporting on student progress remains the responsibility of OUA under the HESA provisions, thereby minimising the administrative burden on the university.

National marketing 365 days a year

A not-for-profit organisation, OUA offers a marketplace that helps students explore, choose and enrol in thousands of degrees and subjects from leading Australian universities online.

This gives students the ability to find and compare degrees and subjects from universities outside of their immediate radius – meeting the need to “study what I want, where I want,” so often associated with online education.

OUA reaches students across Australia through national marketing that prominently features our university partners brands.



To explore new partnership opportunities

Contact the partner team

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