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See page two for available project details. You'll collaborate with academic supervisors to tailor these into personalised projects aligned with your interests.

VU is a world-class university, renowned for our inclusive environment, industry connections and innovative approach to education. The Mitchell Institute is Australia's leading institution for education policy research.

Intakes	Duration	Location	2026 Fees (per semester)
Feb, Jul	2 years	City Campus	AU\$17,500



#1 in Victoria
Peer engagement
Skills development
QILT Student Experience Survey 2024



Top 3% in the world
Ranked in the top 3% of all
universities worldwide
Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026

Trends in participation in higher education among equity groups

This project investigates how participation in higher education has changed over time for students from equity groups, including those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, regional and remote areas, Indigenous communities, and students with disabilities. Using national higher education datasets, the project will track patterns of access and progression, and evaluate the impact of policies designed to widen participation.

Students may also choose to apply a comparative perspective; for example, examining Australian trends alongside those in another country. The goal is to identify where progress has been made and where barriers remain. This project offers the opportunity to develop strong skills in statistical analysis, policy evaluation, and evidence-based research communication, while contributing to forming strategies that can improve access to higher education for underrepresented groups.

Participation in STEM vs. Social Sciences and Humanities

This project examines patterns of student participation in different fields of study, with a focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) compared with the social sciences and humanities. It will analyse national enrolment data to identify which groups of students choose particular fields, how these choices are changing over time, and what this means for equity and for building a workforce that meets Australia's future skill needs.

The project also considers the impact of policy initiatives, such as funding and fee structures, on field-of-study choices. Students may apply a comparative lens to explore how similar issues are addressed in other countries. This research will provide valuable insights into the alignment between education and labour market needs, while building advanced skills in data analysis, interpretation, and policy-focused research.

Pathways into higher education for diverse learners

This project explores the different ways students enter higher education in Australia, with a focus on both the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) system and alternative entry routes such as vocational education and training (VET) pathways, enabling programs, portfolio entry, and university-specific admission schemes. It investigates how these pathways support or limit opportunities for learners from diverse backgrounds (e.g., students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, Indigenous communities, regional and remote areas, and migrant or refugee backgrounds).

Using national education datasets and policy analysis, the project will identify trends, challenges, and areas for reform. Students may also choose to apply a comparative perspective by examining international models of higher education access. This research aims to generate practical policy insights on improving equity and broadening participation while giving students the opportunity to develop strong skills in statistical analysis, data interpretation, and policy evaluation.

Qualifications leading to careers in early childhood education

This project investigates the role of higher education qualifications in preparing students for careers in the early childhood education sector. It will examine enrolment and completion trends in early childhood teacher education programs, explore pathways from vocational qualifications into university study, and assess how well current programs align with workforce needs. Students may also investigate policy settings that shape entry into the profession, including accreditation requirements and funding arrangements.

A comparative approach may be taken by examining how other countries prepare and credential early childhood educators. The project aims to produce practical insights into strengthening the early childhood workforce, while giving students the chance to develop advanced skills in data analysis, education policy evaluation, and applied research with direct social impact.

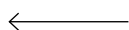
Socioeconomic status and higher education

This project explores how individual-level measures of socioeconomic status (SES) – such as parental education, occupation, and household income – shape participation, experiences and outcomes in higher education. While most Australian equity policies rely on area-based SES indicators, these can mask disadvantage experienced by individuals living in higher SES regions. This study will analyse student-level survey and administrative datasets to evaluate the strengths and limitations of individual SES measures, and how they correlate with access, field-of-study choices, and student success.

Where appropriate, international comparisons may be included to highlight alternative approaches to measuring and addressing SES in higher education policy. The project aims to generate practical insights into how governments and universities can refine equity metrics and develop targeted interventions, while equipping students with advanced skills in statistical modelling, policy analysis, and applied higher education research.



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