



Founding University Partner Program

A controlled partnership framework for Australian universities

Program Overview | September 2026 | Version 1.0

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Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence has fundamentally changed the operational environment for Australian higher education. With significant portions of coursework now generated or assisted by AI, universities face complex challenges regarding academic integrity, research governance, cost attribution, and sustainability reporting. The Cetus AI Founding University Partner Program is designed to equip a select number of Australian universities with the enterprise AI governance infrastructure needed to build institutional evidence and accountability. By providing full platform access—including Teams, Control, Evidence Fabric, and Value Control—the program enables participating institutions to move beyond acceptable-use policies and implement operational AI controls.

The Higher Education AI Governance Challenge

Australian universities are operating in an environment where AI usage is pervasive but often invisible to central governance systems. Recent analyses suggest that over half of tertiary submissions contain AI-generated content [1]. Furthermore, a significant majority of staff and students are using AI tools, yet institutional visibility into this usage remains limited.

The core challenges for university governance include:

Academic Integrity and Assessment Security: Existing detection tools are increasingly unreliable. Universities need to shift from reactive detection to proactive governance of AI use throughout the assessment lifecycle.

Shadow AI and Data Privacy: Staff and students frequently use unsanctioned, consumer-grade AI tools, creating direct exposure to privacy breaches and data sovereignty risks.

Cost and Resource Attribution: As universities provide sanctioned AI tools (such as enterprise copilots or internal models), tracking token consumption and attributing costs to specific faculties, research projects, or student cohorts becomes essential.

Sustainability Reporting: AI inference carries a measurable carbon footprint. Universities face growing expectations, including AASB S2 reporting requirements, to measure and disclose these emissions.

These challenges cannot be solved by policy alone. They require operational infrastructure that connects policy intent with technical execution and reviewable evidence.

The Cetus AI Approach: Operational Control and Evidence

Cetus AI provides the infrastructure to bridge the gap between institutional policy and runtime execution. The platform is built around four core capability groups, each addressing specific university requirements.

Teams: Visibility and Governance Intake

The Teams component provides enterprise visibility. It enables universities to discover unsanctioned AI usage (Shadow AI), manage user declarations, and maintain a comprehensive inventory of AI tools operating across the institution. This foundational visibility is necessary to understand the true scope of AI risk and resource consumption.

Control: Policy, Identity, and Runtime Guardrails

The Control component translates university policy into operational rules. It allows institutions to enforce specific conditions on AI workloads. For example, a university can configure rules to require PII redaction before data is sent to external models, enforce spending limits on specific research projects or student cohorts, route workloads to approved models based on data classification, and implement human-in-the-loop review gates for high-risk administrative decisions.

Evidence Fabric: Shared Institutional Evidence

The Evidence Fabric correlates telemetry from across the university's existing systems (such as identity providers, API gateways, and cloud platforms) with Cetus AI policy decisions. This creates a reviewable, tamper-evident record of AI activity. Rather than relying on fragmented logs, the university can generate individual decision records and policy-enforcement logs that support academic integrity investigations, research audits, and regulatory reporting.

The Evidence Fabric supports a university process within configured coverage; it does not make the university compliant, prove causation, replace an auditor, or guarantee completeness.

Value Control: Integrated Cost and Sustainability Management

Value Control is an integrated module within the Cetus AI platform. It provides token-level attribution of AI consumption, allowing universities to allocate costs accurately across departments. Furthermore, it supports the measurement and reporting of AI-related emissions, assisting institutions in meeting their sustainability objectives and AASB S2 disclosure requirements. Value Control distinguishes forecast, observed, attributed, finance-validated, and risk-adjusted value.

Founding University Partner Program Details

Cetus AI is selecting a small number of Australian universities to participate as Founding Partners. The program is structured to deliver operational value while establishing a long-term governance capability.

Program Benefits

Participating institutions receive complete access to the Cetus AI platform (Teams, Control, Evidence Fabric, and Value Control) for the duration of the partnership period. They also receive direct assistance from Cetus AI engineering teams to validate deployment patterns against the university's existing architecture, identity systems, and operating model. Cetus AI provides support in translating the university's specific academic integrity, research, and administrative policies into operational guardrails. Furthermore, partners have the opportunity to shape the Cetus AI product roadmap, ensuring the platform continues to meet the unique needs of the Australian higher education sector.

University Responsibilities and Limitations

The platform is built and available for controlled enterprise deployment. However, successful implementation requires active participation from the university. Customer-specific integrations must be validated against the university's architecture, security posture, and performance requirements. Cetus AI provides the enforcement mechanism; the university retains full ownership of its policies, risk acceptance, and governance decisions.

Transition to Ongoing Arrangements

The Founding Partner Program is designed to demonstrate value within a defined period. Before the program concludes, Cetus AI will work with each institution to agree on ongoing commercial and operational arrangements tailored to their specific deployment scale and governance requirements.

The Imperative for Structured Governance

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence in higher education has outpaced the development of traditional governance frameworks. Universities are complex environments, characterised by diverse user groups—students, academic staff, researchers, and administrative personnel—each with distinct AI use cases and risk profiles. A single, monolithic AI policy is insufficient to address this complexity. Instead, institutions require a structured, multi-layered approach to governance that can adapt to different contexts while maintaining central visibility and control.

Addressing the Student Experience

For students, AI presents both an opportunity for enhanced learning and a significant risk to academic integrity. The proliferation of generative AI tools has made it increasingly difficult for educators to distinguish between original student work and AI-generated content. Traditional plagiarism detection software, which relies on text matching, is largely ineffective against novel AI outputs.

The Founding University Partner Program enables institutions to implement nuanced controls around student AI use. Rather than attempting to ban AI entirely—an approach that is both technically unfeasible and educationally counterproductive—universities can use Cetus AI to enforce specific usage policies. For example, the platform can be configured to require students to declare their use of AI tools for specific assignments, or to route student

queries through approved, university-managed AI interfaces that log interactions and provide equitable access to all students.

Supporting Academic and Research Integrity

Academic staff and researchers face their own set of AI-related challenges. The use of AI in research design, data analysis, and manuscript preparation raises questions about reproducibility, bias, and intellectual property. Furthermore, the inadvertent input of sensitive research data or unpublished findings into public AI models can compromise confidentiality and violate grant conditions.

Cetus AI's Control component allows universities to establish secure, ring-fenced AI environments for research purposes. By implementing data loss prevention guardrails and PII redaction rules, institutions can ensure that sensitive information is stripped from prompts before they are processed by external language models. The Evidence Fabric provides a crucial audit trail, allowing researchers to document exactly which AI models were used, what data was processed, and what parameters were applied, thereby supporting the reproducibility and integrity of their work.

Streamlining Administrative Operations

Beyond teaching and research, universities are increasingly deploying AI to streamline administrative operations, from student admissions and course scheduling to financial management and alumni relations. These applications often involve the processing of highly sensitive personal and financial data, making robust governance essential. The Cetus AI platform supports the safe deployment of administrative AI by enforcing strict access controls and human-in-the-loop review processes. For instance, if an AI system is used to assist in evaluating student applications, Cetus AI can be configured to require a human admissions officer to review and approve the AI's recommendation before a final decision is made. The platform's automated-decision register maintains a clear record of these workflows, providing the necessary transparency to satisfy internal audits and external regulatory requirements.

The Architecture of Enterprise AI Governance

Implementing effective AI governance across a university requires an architecture that is both robust and flexible. Cetus AI is designed to integrate seamlessly with an institution's existing technology stack, enhancing rather than replacing established systems.

Integration with Existing Systems

Universities typically rely on a complex ecosystem of identity providers, learning management systems, research data repositories, and enterprise resource planning software. Cetus AI's additive architecture allows it to connect with these systems, drawing on existing identity and context data to inform AI policy decisions.

The Policy Decision API is a key enabler of this integration. It allows the university's existing orchestration layer to query Cetus AI for a policy decision (approve, deny, or approve with conditions) before an AI workload is executed. This ensures that governance checks are applied consistently across all applications and interfaces, without requiring the university to route all traffic through a single, proprietary bottleneck.

Deployment Flexibility

Recognising that different workloads have different security and performance requirements, Cetus AI supports multiple deployment patterns. The Founding University Partner Program includes dedicated architecture support to help institutions determine the optimal deployment strategy for their specific needs. This collaborative approach ensures that the governance infrastructure is aligned with the university's broader IT strategy and risk appetite.

Measuring and Managing AI Costs

The financial implications of AI adoption are a growing concern for university administrators. The shift from traditional software licensing models to consumption-based pricing can lead to unpredictable and rapidly escalating expenses.

The Challenge of Unattributed Spend

In many institutions, AI costs are currently hidden within departmental budgets or absorbed by central IT without clear attribution to specific users or projects. This lack of visibility makes it difficult to assess the value of AI initiatives or to implement effective cost controls.

Value Control in Practice

The Value Control module addresses this challenge by providing granular visibility into AI consumption. It tracks token usage across the university, attributing costs to individual users, research groups, or academic departments. This data enables finance teams to establish accurate chargeback models and to identify areas of inefficient or excessive usage.

Furthermore, Value Control allows universities to implement proactive budget guardrails. Administrators can set spending limits for specific cohorts or require approval for high-cost model requests. By linking cost management directly to the governance policy engine, Cetus AI ensures that financial controls are enforced automatically at runtime.

Conclusion

The integration of artificial intelligence into Australian higher education is an ongoing and transformative process. To navigate this transition successfully, universities must move beyond abstract principles and implement operational governance infrastructure. The Cetus AI Founding University Partner Program provides a structured pathway for institutions to achieve this goal, delivering the visibility and control necessary to realise the benefits of AI while managing its associated risks.

Next Steps

We invite forward-thinking Australian universities to join us in establishing the standard for institutional AI governance.

1. **Review the Capabilities:** Examine the public Release 2026.09.4 capability status to understand the current evidence boundaries.
2. **Assess Readiness:** Evaluate your institution's current AI visibility, policy maturity, and integration architecture.
3. **Contact Cetus AI:** Reach out to discuss your university's specific governance challenges and explore suitability for the Founding Partner Program.

References

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3. Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). "Academic integrity toolkit." May 8, 2026. Available at: <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/protecting-academic-integrity/academic-integrity-toolkit>

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