



Our Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles are supported by theory and research, each of fundamental importance to our particular circumstance recognising the diverse characteristics of our student population, our commitment to widening participation and a student-centred approach; supporting opportunity in access and excellence in outcomes and recognising that it is the total experience which counts:

1. **Need for coherence, integration and coordination of initiatives and programs at the institutional level:** The information provided to students and their experiences, both curricular and co-curricular need to be *congruent* and *self-reinforcing*. Such an approach offers opportunities for enhanced efficiencies through value adding and alignment, as well as enhanced effectiveness – that the *sum can be greater than the parts*;
2. **Taking a Student Perspective:** looking at the student experience through their eyes, at their stage of understanding and transition, and understanding what their reasonable expectations are of interaction with *the university*, as opposed to its component parts which are largely meaningless to them;
3. **Bridging Sociocultural Incongruity:** The need to recognise, accept and plan strategies and approaches which ‘*bridge sociocultural incongruity*’¹. Recognising and enacting this need is important across all aspects of planning for student transition, both curricular and co-curricular, including all touch points between the institution and students.
4. **Transition is a Process not an Event:** The University has an obligation to intentionally provide the necessary conditions and opportunities for student transition and success² which encourage and support student engagement;
5. **Curriculum as Anchor:** The *course curriculum* provides the *core connecting and meaningful construct* to which student transition (and learning) is anchored, experienced and made sense of – thus the need for aligning curricular and co-curricular activities³ in a self-reinforcing and congruent manner;
6. **Collaborative Approach:** A successful institutional approach requires a balance between institutionally led and directed strategies and harnessing the capacity, motivation & enthusiasm for the bottom up generation of innovative approaches and/or local (school, course, discipline) variation which can be supported, evaluated and adopted institutionally when proven effective and transferable, along with institutional support for scholarship and research;
7. **Everyone’s Business:** That student transition and success is “*everyone’s business*” requiring strong, effective and supportive relationships between both academic and professional staff within schools and across administrative units at all levels of the institution, supported by institutional policies and practices⁴.
8. **Evidenced Based:** The need for the right data, at the right level (where it is meaningful and able to be acted on), readily available at the right time, in the right format, with processes to ensure institution wide accountability and responsiveness to such data⁵.

¹ Devlin, M., Kift, S., Nelson, K., Smith, L. & McKay, J. (2012). *Effective teaching and Support of students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds: Resources for Australian higher education*. Canberra, Australia, Final Report of OLT Project.

² Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H. & Scales, B. (2008). *Review of Australian Higher Education. Final Report*. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia; Tinto, V. (2009) *Taking student retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of university*. Paper presented at the FYE Curriculum Design Symposium 2009, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

³ Kift, S., Nelson, K. & Clarke, J. (2010). Transition Pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE – A case study of policy and practice for the higher education sector. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 1(1), 1-20.

⁴ Foundational Dimensions. (2005) *Foundational Dimensions® (Four-year college version)*. John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education.

⁵ James, H. (2012). *How can a strategic approach improve institutional level student retention performance?* Keynote address: What works? Student retention and success conference 2012. The University of York, England, 28-29 March, 2012.