

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Western Sydney University Learning Futures Plan

2016–2020



WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY LEARNING FUTURES PLAN 2016–2020

PREAMBLE

Outstanding student centred learning and teaching is at the heart of Western Sydney University's mission and its Securing Success Strategic Plan. The Western Sydney Learning Futures Plan 2016–2020 positions the University for its next phase of learning transformation as part of that Strategy.

To be student centred in our teaching means knowing our students, their educational needs, the communities they belong to, and the rich experiences they bring to learning. It means knowing how our students learn effectively across diverse, technology-enhanced learning environments. Most importantly, it means knowing their aspirations; how they want to live, work and contribute to a rapidly changing world in the future. If those aspirations are to be realised as 'success', it also means knowing and engaging with that future world ourselves through our research, teaching and service.

This 'student centred' understanding shapes curriculum and teaching at Western Sydney as a dynamic, connected, intellectually challenging and rewarding experience for both teacher and learner. It encourages us to actively engage students through collaborative relationships with teachers, researchers, industry and their communities,

and through learning opportunities that take advantage of a digitally connected world. Our students and our staff already:

- Thrive in a globally interconnected world that is rich in complexity and challenged by uncertainty.
- Embrace digital technologies that are changing constantly, becoming more powerful, more mobile, more disruptive and ubiquitous.
- Engage with multiple and diverse opportunities for learning, traversing modalities and contexts, and imagine new possibilities.
- Experience and create digital disruptions and innovations that rapidly reshape the world of work for themselves and society.
- Live, learn and work across many cultures with a deep commitment to their local communities.
- Want to belong, create, succeed, and contribute through their work to make a difference in their society.

These qualities will become even more apparent and important in the next phase of our work to progress Securing Success.

The Western Sydney University Learning Futures Plan 2016–2020 builds on these qualities of our staff, our students, and our world. It places the **student at the centre** of teaching and learning, supported by innovative learning **designs, experiences, environments and enablers**. The Learning Futures Plan 2016–2020 is informed by these key principles:

- Student centred learning designs are flexible, accessible and inclusive; they encourage learning as an open-ended, integrative, life-long process developed through engaging meaningfully with diverse experiences and ideas.
- Student centred learning experiences are active, collaborative and reciprocal experiences, engaging learners and teachers in co-creating meaningful knowledge.
- Student centred learning environments embody the contemporary qualities of the world our teachers and students live and work in, they are technology-enabled, participant-shaped, industry-engaged and increasingly, industry and community co-located.
- Student centred learning enablers effectively support, encourage and reward learners and teachers to succeed and excel in student centred teaching and learning.

These principles of innovative learning **designs, experiences, environments and enablers** are informed by research, industry engagement and an understanding of society's needs and underpinned by an emphasis on **quality** that is firmly grounded in evidence-based decision-making.

The Learning Futures Plan 2016–2020 aligns with the revised national Higher Education Standards. It is underpinned by evidence of quality in relation to those standards and to the key measures in Securing Success. It promotes academic excellence, integrity and creativity at the highest levels.

OVERVIEW

A DISTINCTIVELY STUDENT FOCUSED
LEARNING EXPERIENCE IS AT THE
CENTRE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING
AT WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

SUPPORTED BY FOUR PILLARS

- LEARNING DESIGNS
- LEARNING EXPERIENCES
- LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
- LEARNING ENABLERS

UNDERPINNED BY AN

- EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH TO QUALITY



1. LEARNING DESIGNS

Western Sydney University staff will design curricula and assessment that foster the development of graduates who are:

- **Future Focused:** Creative inquiry-led, multidisciplinary, novel solution oriented thinkers.
- **Citizen Scholars:** Informed and engaged local and global citizens, culturally competent, (particularly in regard to Indigenous cultures), committed to sustainability and the value of diversity, adept communicators and stewards of their Western Sydney communities.
- **Innovation Entrepreneurs:** Resilient, technologically savvy leaders with advanced knowledge and practical skills.

Our **Learning designs** will be:

- **Coherent.** Our degree structure will be clear, accessible, coherent and enable articulated pathways. Our learning designs will be student centred and outcome-focused; creatively aligning curriculum, teaching, and assessment to inspire and promote student learning.
- **Multidisciplinary.** Where possible, provide opportunities for multidisciplinary learning experiences and enable students to incorporate learning from experiences beyond their current course structures.
- **Research-informed.** Embedding research-like learning, and student engagement with the university's scholarship and research expertise.
- **Scaffolded.** Progressively embedded with engaging activities to support student learning and the development of graduate attributes (in particular, the Indigenous Graduate Attribute).
- **Evidence-based.** Grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning, peer reviewed and where relevant externally benchmarked for quality.

Consistent with these Learning Design principles we will undertake the following initiatives.

INITIATIVES 2016–2017

- 1.1** Commence work on a new Course Design framework and policies to improve transparency, coherence and pathways in our degree architecture.
- 1.2** Enable and facilitate cross-School processes that enhance course design, development and quality consistent with agreed Learning Design principles, and provide students with opportunities to select and study specialisations from across disciplines and Schools.
- 1.3** Enhance our capacity to strategically shape the University's course profile. Map new course development against foreseeable employment trends, identifying and ensuring discipline knowledges, skills and capabilities that are required for changing and emerging employability.
- 1.4** Develop modularised curricula, and co-curricular learning opportunities that allow students to aggregate learning credentials to achieve course learning outcomes and qualifications.
- 1.5** Develop and implement the University's Curriculum Mapping Tool and record, review and reimagine courses and units to assure and enhance coherence and quality.
- 1.6** Review and further enhance the meaningful inclusion of the Western Sydney University Graduate Attributes in all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs, with particular emphasis on the Indigenous Graduate Attribute.
- 1.7** Build on the successful 2015 pilot of embedded curriculum transition pedagogies (HIPSTaRS) to progressively embed this transition pedagogy in strategically important core commencing units in all Schools to improve retention.
- 1.8** Support a comprehensive review of assessment designs and subsequent actions, including assuring the validity, rigour and academic integrity of assessment and grading processes and reimagining innovative, robust assessment designs consistent with the University's learning design principles.

2018-2020

Review of progress, extension and addition of new strategies.

INDICATORS

1. Preliminary Course Design framework developed for consultation
2. Increase in number of courses available to students with cross-school/discipline involvement
3. Increase in preferences and enrolments in strategically re-designed courses and improvement in proxy measures of the quality of the student experience and engagement (SES, SFU)
4. Increase in percentage of new course proposals that align with future-focused employment trends
5. Proportion of courses mapped and reviewed using the Curriculum Mapping Tool
6. Proportion of mapped courses that demonstrate progressive development of Graduate Attributes
7. Proportion of first year courses with embedded curriculum transition pedagogies
8. Report and actions arising from assessment review to provide evidence of quality assured assessment designs and practices

SECURING SUCCESS

- 3.4 Offer professional learning and postgraduate courses that are responsive to the changing needs of the professions and emerging forms of work
- 3.5 Offer a curriculum that is informed by the University's research and which promotes inter-disciplinary engagement
- 3.6 Offer innovative courses that respond to changing global employment markets and industry and community needs
- 3.8 Ensure the development and inclusion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Graduate Attribute within all courses.





**FUTURE
FOCUSED**

2. LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Western Sydney University will create **learning experiences** that:

- **Exemplify experiential, integrative learning**, through a range of (industry/community/research) work integrated learning, and integrative internship experiences, with both local and global scope.
- **Incorporate flexible, adaptive technology-enabled learning**, seamlessly connecting learning resources and technologies, enabling students to access learning opportunities in any time, place and mode of engagement.
- **Support learning**, through learner-focused teaching and assessment practices, and the embedded development of academic literacies for learning independence and excellence.
- **Transcend discipline and institutional boundaries**, through engagements with other students, academics, communities and cultures.



INITIATIVES 2016–2017

- 2.1** Progressively integrate experiential and integrative learning experiences in all undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses.
- 2.2** (In collaboration with Research and Development Portfolio) Enhance opportunities for students to experience a research internship/project during their undergraduate studies.
- 2.3** Enhance opportunities for students to include at least one international experience in their course.
- 2.4** Develop the next stage of Western Sydney Online as a sustainable and engaging offering, and target courses and units, progressively and strategically, for fully online delivery employing exemplary, innovative pedagogies.
- 2.5** Continue to review and implement blended learning pedagogies and hybrid delivery of courses to enable a continuum of flexibility in the way students engage and learn.
- 2.6** Develop and promote a Career Advantage+ program to undergraduate coursework students.
- 2.7** Implement and evaluate a sustainable and effective Library Study Smart program of academic literacy support for all students.
- 2.8** Strategically develop and evaluate Learning Centres to enable enhanced student access to Western Sydney University learning resources and support collaborative learning.

2018–2020

Review of progress, extension and addition of new strategies.

INDICATORS

1. Increase in proportion of undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses with experiential and integrative (industry, community, research, international) learning opportunities for all students.
2. Increase in proxy measures of students' perceptions of skills development and course relevance (SES, SFU).
3. Increase in numbers of students participating in career preparation programs and subsequent improvement in employment outcome data (GDS).
4. Increase in overall online load and quantity and quality of Western Sydney Online offerings.
5. Increased proportion of units that are equal to or above the blended learning quality criterion.
6. Study Smart program evaluation and improvement in proxy measures of students' perceptions of learning support (SES).
7. College Learning Centre strategy evaluation.

SECURING SUCCESS

- 1.5 Ensure that all learning and personal support services positively differentiate the Western Sydney University student experience
- 1.8 Develop more employment-based and volunteering programs and experiences that promote personal development, industry and civic engagement and career readiness
- 3.2 Use technology innovatively to provide students with access to authentic, engaging and diverse learning experiences tailored to their interests, capabilities and aspirations
- 3.3 Enrich the student experience by increasing internationalisation of the curriculum
- 3.7 Expand flexible and creative modes of course delivery through high quality and engaging on-campus, online and hybrid programs in response to emerging student needs and workforce demand



3. LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Western Sydney University will create **learning environments** that are:

- **Learner-focused.** Enabling students to engage collaboratively, meaningfully and iteratively with each other and with learning resources, as and when they need them, across a mix of formal and informal learning spaces.
- **Technology-rich.** Seamlessly infusing digital technologies for learning, innovation and work.
- **Permeable.** Encouraging collaborations between students, teachers, researchers, industry and communities to support student learning.
- **Local.** Embedded in communities, as campuses and learning centres, both domestically and internationally.
- **Vibrant.** Promoting environmental and social sustainability and cultural awareness.

INITIATIVES 2016–2017

- 3.1** Developing an exemplary Parramatta City Campus (IPSQ) which facilitates industry engagement and showcases technology-rich, flexible learning environments, collaborative study areas and personal learning spaces.
- 3.2** Continue to support the design and implementation of exemplary pedagogies that support collaborative learning in technology-rich, learner-focused learning spaces.
- 3.3** Trial and enhance the design of new technology-rich learning environments through prototype Learning Studios, virtual face-to-face projects, incubator space and video/media labs.
- 3.4** Progressively develop all formal learning spaces on campuses as collaborative, technology-rich and learner-focused spaces.

2018–2020

Review of progress, extension and addition of new strategies.

INDICATORS

- 1.** Benefit realisation evaluation for Parramatta City Campus indicates supported transition to a successful learning and teaching experience for staff and students.
- 2.** Evaluation reports received by relevant committees on pilot of technology rich learning environments.
- 3.** Improved relevant proxy measures of teaching quality and learner engagement (UES, SFU).
- 4.** Increase in proportion of formal campus teaching spaces developed as collaborative learner-focused spaces.

SECURING SUCCESS

- 3.2** Use technology innovatively to provide students with access to authentic, engaging and diverse learning experiences tailored to their interests, capabilities and aspirations.



4. LEARNING ENABLERS

The University will provide **enabling opportunities** for high quality learning and teaching that:

- **Support Students.** Engage, enthuse and effectively support learners to achieve success in their studies and adhere to the highest levels of academic integrity and scholarship.
- **Support Staff.** Engage, enthuse and effectively support teachers to engage in creative, innovative teaching and curriculum design.
- **Ensure Quality.** Promote exemplary, evidence-based standards, and align with the Higher Education Standards Framework.
- **Empower the Institution.** Create a university policy framework and organisational culture that nurtures and supports the strategies outlined in this plan.

INITIATIVES 2016–2017

- 4.1.** Develop a university-endorsed strategy, incorporating new university-wide learning opportunities, to better support the professional development of all university teachers in relation to the strategies outlined in the 2016–2020 Learning Futures Plan.
- 4.2** Develop and implement a coherent Academic Literacies Support strategy including a Mathematics Education Support program for students, in collaboration with The College, the Library, Schools and relevant Portfolios.
- 4.3** Develop and implement an Education for Academic Integrity strategy and monitor impact in relation to the new Student Misconduct Rule.
- 4.4** Develop an annual plan (through Academic Senate's Student Experience and Engagement Committee) to enhance the coordination, uptake and impact of the University's various transition initiatives, to improve retention and progression from enrolment to graduation.
- 4.5** Renew the University's student surveys to better support staff teaching and curriculum innovation, Course planning and review, and institutional curriculum and teaching strategy.
- 4.6** Implement the Learning Analytics project and support staff understanding and use of data for enhanced evidence-based decision-making about learning designs and students' engagement with learning experiences.
- 4.7** Implement five-year cyclical reviews of Schools and courses, employing student feedback, course performance data, stakeholder feedback, student voices and learning analytics to ensure evidence-based decision-making about course viability, course quality assurance and enhancements.
- 4.8** Develop new recognition and reward strategies (including promotion pathways) to foster an organisational culture that better nurtures and celebrates contributions to teaching and learning.

- 4.9** Through Academic Senate's Education Committee, progressively renew the University's teaching and learning policy framework to better support the Learning Futures plan.

2018–2020

Review of progress, extension and addition of new strategies.

INDICATORS

- 1.** Professional Development for University Teaching strategy implemented and evaluated.
- 2.** Academic Literacies Support strategy implemented and evaluated.
- 3.** Education for Academic Integrity strategy implemented and evaluated.
- 4.** Student Transition Retention and Progression Plan endorsed and implemented.
- 5.** Revised survey system implemented and evaluated.
- 6.** Increased use of learning analytics by university staff to inform learning design.
- 7.** Cyclical reviews of Schools and courses commenced and recommendations implemented.
- 8.** Renewed institutional teaching recognition and reward strategies implemented and evaluated.
- 9.** Revised University education policies developed and endorsed by Academic Senate.



SECURING SUCCESS

- 1.5** Ensure that all learning and personal support services positively differentiate the Western Sydney University student experience
- 3.9** Monitor the performance of courses on the basis of demand, attractiveness and quality using a course lifecycle model
- 3.10** Continue to support teaching that engages students as active participants in their learning and development
- 6.6** Equip and train staff in the use of emerging technologies which encourage innovation and efficiency
- 6.7** Foster a strong culture and track record of successful renewal and innovation, achieved through the determination, creativity and hard work of all staff
- 6.8** Continue to invest in cutting-edge technology to ensure staff and students benefit from an excellent and modern learning environment

5. QUALITY

Each of the four pillars of the student centred learning and teaching experience at Western Sydney University is enriched through a renewed focus on quality.

- The initiatives identified for each of the four pillars of; learning designs, learning experiences, learning environments and learning enablers will be based on research, informed by student and staff consultation and feedback and monitored drawing on institutional data.
- The commitment to quality embraces external accreditation by professional bodies, peer review and benchmarking against national (and international) standards where appropriate.
- Our data sources and evidence of quality support our students in planning their studies and successful careers.

INITIATIVES 2016–2017

- 5.1** Review and develop organizational data capabilities to better support curriculum development and load planning.
- 5.2** Implement an agreed schedule of Teaching and Learning Quality reports to the Senate Education Committee and the University Executive Committee reporting key indicators included in the 2016–2020 strategic plan.





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