



## Project Brief: 21st Century Curriculum Project

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### Executive Summary

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Curriculum Project (21CC) will renew our curriculum to:

1. Better leverage and reflect our unique institutional partnership strengths and communities;
2. Enable us to innovate at scale to respond to emergent opportunities in our external context;
3. Make our curriculum more relevant, accessible and attractive to prospective students;
4. Realise our potential share of Australia's global education brand.

The project seeks to make The University more efficient with a simpler curriculum architecture, but also more competitive. With more attractive, accessible course offerings we can increase market share and build student load and revenue. The project has two elements: (i) the development of simpler shared architectures for our degrees to capitalise on synergies between degrees enabling agile innovation at scale, and improving 'visibility' to students (ii) the reinvigoration of our existing degrees under those shared architectures, through the inclusion of new signature learning experiences and opportunities to enhance our students' career success.

Our new curriculum will deliver the lived experience of our new brand for our students. We will agree to new distinctive graduate attributes based on our Leadership Team discussions last year:

- **Future Thinkers:** Creative inquiry-led, multidisciplinary, future focused, 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 our Western Sydney community and their chosen communities
- **Innovation Entrepreneurs:** Resilient, technologically savvy leaders with advanced knowledge and practical skills.

More importantly for our students, our graduates, their employers and our society, we will bring those aspirational outcomes to life by agreeing on the distinctive 'signature' learning opportunities we will embed across the new simplified curriculum architecture of our degrees. Those curriculum and co-curriculum signature experiences will be designed to deliver a distinctive competitive edge to our graduates in the workforce. They will leverage our unique **Partnerships** and **Pathways** to build both aspiration and participation:

#### *Embedding Aspiration: Partnerships*

- Greater Western Sydney local community (and business) engagement: (Volunteers, community groups, WSBC, Aboriginal Elders, alumni etc.)
- Network partners: (Sydney School of Entrepreneurship, SemiPermanent, United Nations University etc.)
- Industry partners: (PwC, WSU internship scheme, Jobs for the West etc.)
- Commercial provider partners: (Adobe, Microsoft etc.)
- Edu-venture partners: (OES, SIBT etc.)
- Research & innovation partners: (themes, Institute/industry partnerships, Launchpad etc.)

*Enabling Participation: Pathways*

- Alternative entry and re-entry pathways, and scaffolded academic student success (RPL, alternative credentials)
- Scaffolded academic success (The College, transition support)

The project scope and strategy were formally endorsed by Executive Committee in March 2017 based on the preparatory work of the Transforming Western Sydney University (TWSU) working groups. The project will continue in three overlapping stages across the next three years.

STAGE	Key Outcomes		
	2017	2018	2019
<b>1: PLAN &amp; ANALYSE:</b> Agree the basic architectures and create opportunities for simplification and new inclusions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outputs:</b></li> <li>• Endorse a set of shared curriculum structures (Executive)</li> <li>• Revised Graduate Attributes and agreed Signature Learning Experiences (Senate)</li> <li>• Revised School course profiles to remove redundancies (CLPG)</li> </ul>		
<b>2: DESIGN &amp; DEVELOP:</b> Develop new elements and implement the curriculum architecture(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milestones:</b></li> <li>• Design, develop and pilot new curriculum elements.</li> <li>• New partnerships</li> <li>• Develop timelines for implementing shared degree architecture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outputs:</b></li> <li>• Embedded curriculum elements in coherent courses under shared architecture</li> <li>• Prospective student cohort marketing strategy to communicate ‘signature experiences’ and distinctive ‘value’ proposition</li> </ul>	
<b>3: FUTURE PROOF &amp; SUSTAIN:</b> Implement processes to ensure course offerings remain competitive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milestones:</b></li> <li>• Identify efficiencies in shared architecture</li> <li>• Develop learning analytics for curriculum development</li> <li>• Develop business intelligence for course review and planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Milestones:</b></li> <li>• Implement efficiencies arising from shared architecture</li> <li>• Systemic support for development of new course offerings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outputs:</b></li> <li>• A streamlined course design review and approval process</li> <li>• System for overall adaptive and pre-emptive course profile review and external referencing</li> </ul>

## Background

Curriculum describes what it is ‘possible’ for prospective students to achieve at Western Sydney University. It largely determines the education experiences our students will have, and what our graduates will take from their learning into their careers. Hence it is a key driver of prospective student demand, future load and institutional revenue.

There are many organizational ‘structures’ within the university – but the most central to our core mission and ongoing financial sustainability are our curriculum structures. ‘Curriculum’ structures are what our students experience when they come to university to learn. Prospective students’ expectations of what and how they will learn, and the perceived benefits of that learning, are at the heart of their decision to study with Western Sydney University. Our curriculum must epitomise our brand if we are to build market share.

*This project is an opportunity for the University to decide what our future curriculum should be like. It is essential that we do this well, as our curriculum will play a significant role in determining if we remain competitive in today’s challenging higher education market.*

Curriculum structures include: the recognition and support we give to the various learning pathways students take to enter the university; what we teach; how we teach; the learning environment(s) we provide; how we support learning; and how we make judgements about learning (assessment) and what outcomes students achieve. Curriculum and the courses we offer should differentiate us from our competitors and attract students to study with us. At the heart of what we mean by the ‘distinctively Western Sydney University experience’ are the ways in which we:

- organize, structure and scaffold sequences of study;
- deploy a variety of technology-enriched learning environments and experiences;
- embed the development of particular capabilities as key achievements for graduates;
- integrate features such as work-integrated learning and engagement with research.

The way we structure, implement and manage our curriculum influences our agility in responding with new offerings to meet changing demand. It also influences the broader operations of the university through such things as timetabling, unit sequencing, assessment scheduling and staffing.

## **Outcomes for Students**

First and foremost, our curriculum is for our students. The simpler curriculum structures will deliver efficiencies and improved flexibility to the institution. However, our future curriculum must build our graduates’ employment prospects and successes and equip them as capable citizens. The opportunities to engage in employment are changing, and in some fields contracting, with familiar roles being displaced or transformed by technology and innovation. The premium of a university qualification as a pathway to full employment is being challenged by these new work contexts, and our curriculum must adapt to remain relevant. Now and into the future, the world of work is technology-infused and transdisciplinary, with culturally diverse teams developing new capacities in order to work on in ill-defined, ‘wicked’ problems across unfamiliar contexts. Our curriculum needs to ensure students build their networks and engagement with employers while they study. We must educate graduates who are capable of transforming the world sustainably, as they transform the nature of their employment opportunities. Today’s graduates are expected to be career-ready in the conventional sense, and career makers – able to develop jobs for themselves and create opportunities for others. Their education also needs to equip our graduates for the likelihood of an employment ‘portfolio’, comprising multiple careers rather than simply multiple jobs. In a crowded labour market, the learning experiences offered by our curriculum need to equip our graduates with a distinctive competitive advantage. Our graduate qualities need to include a strong focus on the development of distinctive graduates who are:

- **Future Thinkers:** Creative inquiry-led, multidisciplinary, future focused, 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 our Western Sydney community and their chosen communities.

- **Innovation Entrepreneurs:** Resilient, technologically savvy leaders with advanced knowledge and practical skills.

To realise these outcomes for our students, our graduates, their employers and our society, we must bring those aspirational outcome statements to life in our curriculum. An important aspect of this is to agree on the distinctive ‘signature’ learning opportunities we will embed across the new simplified curriculum architecture of our degrees. Those curriculum and co-curriculum signature experiences will be designed to deliver a distinctive competitive edge to our graduates in the workforce. They will:

- Draw on our **research** strengths and external engagement globally (e.g. Multidisciplinary undergraduate inquiry projects that leverage our research themes and international networks)
- Leverage the opportunities inherent in our unique **relationships** with Western Sydney business and industry, (e.g. internships, mentorships, work integrated learning)
- Build on new institutional curriculum and student experience **partnerships** to support skill development and develop networks and international outreach (e.g. Adobe, OES, Sydney School of Entrepreneurship, SemiPermanent, United Nations University)
- Draw on the **diversity** of our students and their communities (Community engagement, social justice programs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and knowledge circles, Muslim and other faith communities, volunteer programs)
- Scaffold our students’ learning to convert their aspirations and **resilience** into career success (academic literacy, integrity, confidence and resilience).

Achieving this distinctive advantage for our graduates necessitates a curriculum that is attractive and accessible to prospective students. It also requires a curriculum that efficiently engages our students in the sort of learning which effectively achieves the outcomes valued by students, employers and society. Prospective students will have an increasing choice of education providers, including new entrants to the sector offering a range of alternative qualifications and credentialing services. It is important to transform our curriculum as it is a reason our future students will choose to study with us, it is also the lynch pin to transforming the way the university is organized and operates. Our curriculum does not consistently make best use of technology rich learning environments and other available resources. Significantly, our curriculum is often complex and difficult for students to navigate, inflexible and restricted to a single discipline, and incapable of accommodating features such as research projects, skill development, internships or exchanges.

## Outcomes for the University

The benefits of a simplified, more coherent curriculum will flow to all parts of the organization.

- The renewal of our curriculum and the inclusion of signature components for all programs i.e., multidisciplinary studies, internships, mentorships, work integrated learning, research projects, capstones, and study abroad opportunities will communicate additional value to prospective students and help us to build load.
- Our research strengths and community engagement provide unrealized opportunities for additional thematic coherence in our curriculum and additional value for prospective students.
- A simpler curriculum structure can allow greater flexibility for agile curriculum development.
- If we simplify our curriculum structures we can make enrolling easier and quicker for our students and a simpler enrolment process is more efficient for us to administer.
- A simplified structure makes student choice easier and accommodates the option of change through a degree. It can accommodate the 10% of students who ‘change their mind’ about their course of study during their first year at university. The simplified structure should also reduce the level of resources required to administer changes.

- A simplified curriculum framework may suggest fewer or shared units, or offer possibilities for shared assessments, freeing staff to offer a more personalized, high quality learning experience.
- If we free up resources from administering complex programs we can invest those resources in our students and their learning.
- We can more fully realise the benefits of technology supported learning environments and target our precious resources where they will have the most impact on student learning.
- With a simpler more coherent structure we can improve pathways between courses and develop more effective ways to recognise students' prior learning, assisting them to complete their degrees efficiently and effectively.

Most importantly, with more attractive course offerings we can potentially increase market share (Domestic CSL/NCSL, UG/PG/HDR and International) and build student load and revenue. Our curriculum renewal offers a potential longer-term solution to the load shortfalls we have experienced recently, and is necessary if we are to realise our potential share of Australia's global education brand in an increasingly competitive market.

## Project Principles

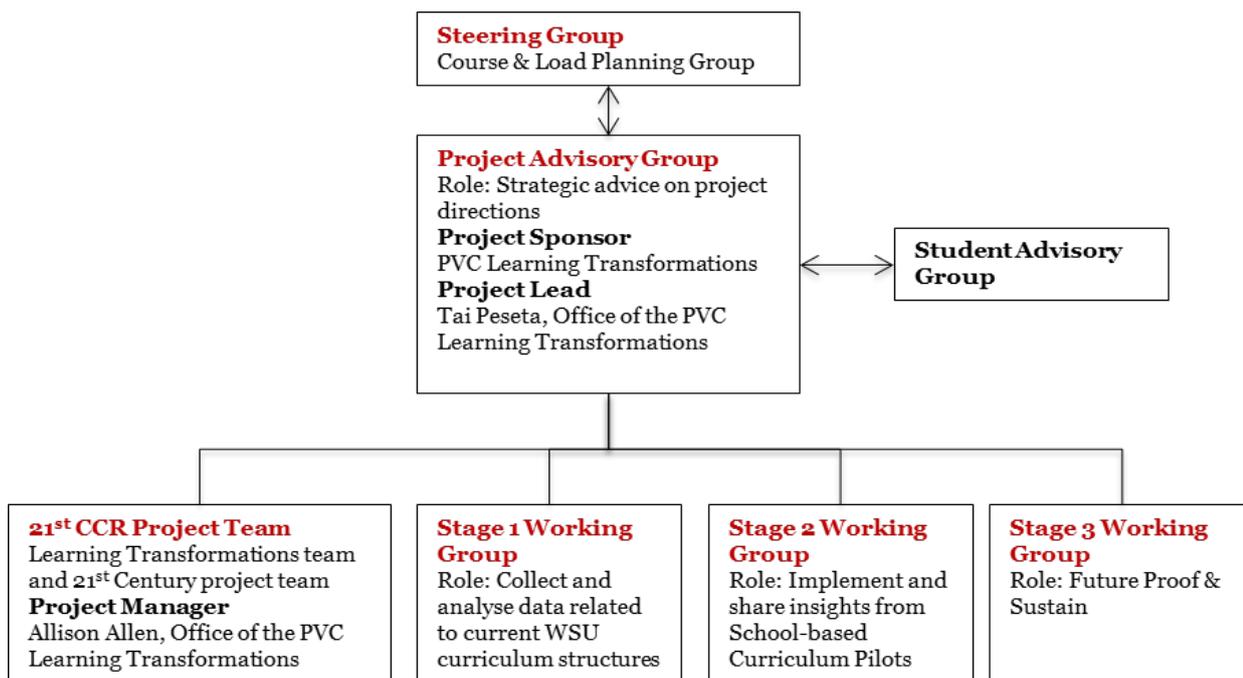
By developing common shared curriculum architectures, the project will enable us to reduce curriculum administration and encourage innovation while delivering more flexible study pathways and more relevant outcomes for 21<sup>st</sup> century students. The project will facilitate the first stage of a university wide renewal of curriculum to improve its relevance and attractiveness to 21<sup>st</sup> century students. Our curriculum structures will help deliver the lived experience of our new brand and signify how we are different from our competitors. Our curriculum transformation project aims to:

1. Produce **efficiencies** arising from a manageable set of shared course architectures that speak to the existing underlying affinities between the curricula in our Schools and courses.
2. Deliver new flexibility for the university to help us **future proof** our offerings by allowing us to innovate within shared curriculum structures with a minimum of bureaucracy, and to collaborate and innovate at scale across the university utilising alignments between different curricula.
3. The curriculum renewal and new architectures should assist us to build revenue by enabling us to offer and market courses that are more **attractive to future students** as a result of the adaptability of our curriculum to student aspirations, its flexibility (including fully online), and significantly; the distinctive learning experiences our curriculum entails and the outcomes it leads to.
4. Encourage wider **access and participation**, through the inclusion of flexible modes of study and flexible pathways into study. Alignment between programs will facilitate transfer between courses, with multiple exit and re-entry points.
5. Build student **retention and employability success** as the new curriculum structures will assist the university to explicitly scaffold support for academic success and career development to ensure graduates are highly competitive in the future job market.
6. Provide **clarity** for students, their families and employers making it easier to see what is possible from learning at Western Sydney, and better enabling our students to navigate their degrees and achieve the outcomes they aspire to.
7. **Engage staff and our community** providing opportunities and encouragement for them to contribute in creative scholarly ways to the educational aspirations of the university.

## Approach

The project will be centrally led and supported, with a managed distribution of resources to Schools to facilitate curriculum renewal activities. Expert input to the project will be provided from the Learning Futures Portfolio which was restructured for this purpose in 2016. The majority of the funding allocated to the Project will be available to support School-based collaborations to develop new curriculum components and resources. The Executive Leads for the Project will be the DVC Academic and PVC Learning Transformations. The Course and Load Planning Group

(CLPG) will provide corporate governance and act as a Steering Group, with regular reporting via the Project Sponsor from CLPG to the Executive Committee and to the Senate Education Committee and Academic Planning and Course Approval Committee. A Project Advisory Group will be established with a core membership of expert curriculum stakeholders from Schools (Deans, Deputy Deans, Directors of T&L etc.) and relevant Portfolios (International, SEO etc.). Additional members will join the Advisory Group as required to support each stage of the Project. Consultation processes will be established to facilitate engagement with industry utilising existing School External Advisory Committees. A student consultation process will be established through the Transforming Western Sydney University Student Voice Project. A Communication Strategy will be developed by the Project Team to ensure staff and students are engaged as active participants in the project.



## Current Activities

The current focus of 21CC Project activity is on the Curriculum School Pilots. The pilots are intended to support Schools address the projects two aims: (i) the development of simpler shared degree structures to capitalise on synergies between degrees that enable agile innovation at scale and improve 'visibility' to students, and (ii) the reinvigoration of our existing degrees under those shared architectures through the inclusion of new signature learning experiences and opportunities to enhance our students' career success. The Pilots are also an opportunity to engage members of the broader university community in shaping the university's future curriculum architecture. It is a strategy that has been designed with that engagement in mind and to ensure timely progress towards agreement about simpler, shared curriculum architectures.

The Learning Futures Portfolio is working with Schools to identify a relevant focus for these Pilots which will be endorsed by the Dean and PVC Learning Transformations. Focus areas include:

1. Degree architectures (simplification and coherence of degree structures; unit overlap and/ or duplication)
2. Embedding Aspiration: Partnerships (Greater Western Sydney local community and business engagement; Network partners; Industry partners; Commercial provider partners; Edu-venture partners; and Research and Innovation partners)
3. Enabling Participation: Pathways (alternative entry and re-entry pathways, RPL, alternative credentials, and scaffolded academic student success)

Funds are available to support the Pilots and there are Learning Futures Portfolio resources that Schools can draw on (including the outputs from the Stage 1 Working Group) to support analysis and planning. Some Schools (Business, Education, Science and Health) have already initiated planning and have agreed on a focus for their Pilots in consultation with the 21CC Team. It is anticipated that Pilots for the remaining Schools will be finalized in the next week. The School pilot teams will be brought together regularly as a core community of practice to shape the overall project and the Office of the PVC Learning Transformations will ensure institutional recognition for their contributions.

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