

UWS Learning and Teaching Plan 2012-2014



Preamble:

The University of Western Sydney *Learning and Teaching Plan 2012-2014* takes account of significant developments in Australian higher education, including the need for institutional responsiveness in an increasingly competitive environment and the imperative to provide evidence of learning and teaching quality and standards in a new regulatory environment. The Plan affirms and extends our commitment to the dual priorities of widening student access to higher education, particularly in Greater Western Sydney, while simultaneously achieving excellence in all aspects of our academic program. It comprises three key objectives, along with implementation strategies, performance measures and indicators of success in the following areas:

- i. our students;
- ii. our curriculum; and
- iii. the quality of our teaching.

The *Learning and Teaching Plan 2012-2014* represents a three-year blueprint to guide strategic planning and implementation in each School and Division. UWS will be known for the flexibility of its academic programs and pathways to university study. Innovative approaches to curriculum delivery and blended learning will be a hallmark of our program offerings. This will be achieved in the context of the UWS Academic Standards and Assessment Framework. Students will value UWS for our commitment to ensuring the success of all students, including under-represented student groups such as those with disabilities, mature age students and students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Advanced unit offerings will continue to attract the best and brightest students in the region. A student lifecycle approach will place a premium on the quality of the first year at UWS as a launching pad for success through the undergraduate years. The quality of the student experience in Honours and postgraduate coursework programs will continue to be a priority.

UWS will engage in a significant curriculum reform process over the next three years under the banner of “*create@UWS – curriculum renewal for excellence and transformative education@UWS*”. This curriculum initiative will include an evidence-based approach to evaluating course and unit offerings, a review of graduate attributes, strengthening of stakeholder engagement through External Advisory Boards and integration of core priorities such as sustainability and engaged learning. Blended learning will be a feature of the *create@UWS* initiative, including fit-for-purpose integration of online offerings to enhance the quality and flexibility of our courses.

Capacity building for academic and sessional staff, along with recognition of teaching excellence, will be integral to the success of this Plan. It comprises a sustained commitment to career and professional development for academic staff, particularly in relation to rewarding teaching excellence. This includes consideration of early career academic pathways, including those for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and professional development for academic and sessional staff to enhance the quality of teaching, assessment and curriculum design. The quality of teaching will be enhanced through strong links between teaching and research, capitalising on the University’s research strengths to develop a vibrant curriculum at undergraduate, Honours and postgraduate levels.

Objective 1: Students - optimize student access, engagement, retention and success

This objective supports the twin priorities of opportunity and excellence in relation to widening participation and attracting the best and brightest students, particularly from the Greater Western Sydney region. A student lifecycle approach underpins the strategies outlined below, including a focus on supporting transition to and through the University of Western Sydney (UWS). The quality of the first year undergraduate experience continues to be an important launching pad for successful progression and completion of study. Partnerships with TAFE, private providers and UWSCollege are key to enriching the pathways available to students and we attach the highest importance to monitoring and assuring the quality of these partnerships. Our priority is to ensure that undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students from diverse backgrounds and abilities enjoy positive learning experiences and successful outcomes at UWS.

Strategies:

1. Implement a strategy to ensure the viability, sustainability and success of first year advising, orientation, transition and mentoring initiatives across UWS.
2. Adopt a targeted approach to integrating academic literacy and numeracy support in each School.
3. Ensure that student engagement, retention and success data - particularly in relation to demographic sub-groups including international students, high achievers, students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways students - inform course and School improvement plans through the Annual Course Review process.
4. Engage strategically with TAFE Institutes, private providers and UWSCollege to enhance pathways, to widen student access to UWS and to ensure the robustness and quality of our articulation and partnership arrangements.

Performance Measures:

1. Equity group participation rates
2. Undergraduate and postgraduate coursework student retention and progression rates
3. University Experience Survey overall satisfaction rates – first and final year
4. UWS Commencing student survey overall satisfaction rates
5. Outcomes – Graduate Destination Survey: Employment (%), Further study (%)

Key Performance indicator:

1. Commencing student retention
2. Widening participation – low socioeconomic status and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation rates
3. University Experience Survey overall satisfaction rates – first and final year

Objective 2: Curriculum and Standards – implement a curriculum characterised by innovation, engagement and excellence

UWS will be known for the innovation and flexibility of its course offerings and their alignment with the University's mission. The *create@UWS* initiative represents *Curriculum renewal for excellence and transformative education@UWS*. This initiative represents an integrating framework within which we will pursue strategic approaches to academic program profiles and sustainable teaching models. The initiative will consider undergraduate, honours and postgraduate coursework offerings in light of existing and future demand and the changing nature of student engagement in Greater Western Sydney. It will also pursue priorities in relation to regional and community engagement, sustainability, flexibility and the benefits of integrative capstone units. Opportunities for enhanced collaboration and articulation with TAFE will also be a feature of the *create@UWS* initiative. The UWS Academic Standards and Assessment Framework will inform a standards-based approach to course quality and standards.

Strategies:

1. Initiate the project "*create@UWS - Curriculum renewal for excellence and transformative education@UWS*" - comprising a holistic approach to curriculum review and renewal and incorporating the strategies below.
2. Implement an academic program management strategy in each School, taking account of the UWS priorities of flexibility, engagement and sustainability.
3. Review teaching models, learning designs and the alignment between course learning outcomes and assessment practices in all courses.
4. Integrate standards-based approaches to assessment, peer review and moderation of learning standards in all courses.
5. Develop a UWS Blended Learning Strategy to enable a blend of face-to-face and online delivery, along with innovative ICT-enabled learning.
6. Review the UWS graduate attributes and apply

curriculum mapping to ensure integration in all courses.

7. Embed relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge in all courses in support of the UWS commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate attribute.
8. Implement the Annual Course Review (ACR) process, focussing on course improvement plans and outcomes.
9. Strengthen the strategic focus and contribution of External Advisory Committees.
10. In keeping with the values of an engaged university, build experiential learning (e.g., service learning, volunteering) into all undergraduate courses beyond that required for clinical and practicum placements in the core curriculum.

Performance Measures:

1. Proportion of courses with evidence of integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge
2. Proportion of units with evidence of engaged learning
3. Proportion of courses involved in external peer review and moderation of learning standards
4. Proportion of units offering blended and online modes of delivery

Key Performance indicator:

1. Evidence of course quality improvement using Annual Course Review indicators, including Graduate Destination Survey

Objective 3: Quality - build staff capacity to engage in quality teaching

Enhancing the quality of the student experience and outcomes relies heavily on developing staff capabilities. Capacity building for academic staff, including sessional staff, will emphasise skill development in curriculum design and teaching at the unit and course levels. Support for academic staff will align with curriculum priorities in such areas as blended learning designs, assessment and feedback, revised teaching models and applying the Academic Standards and Assessment Framework. The scholarship of learning and teaching will be cultivated through such strategies as: evidence-based approaches to teaching; sharing of good practice; and support for improved success in national teaching grants and awards. Collaboration with the Office of People and Culture will include strategies for developing teaching capabilities among those in early career academic pathways, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and postgraduate students. Reward and recognition for leaders in learning and teaching at UWS will be addressed through a review of the promotion policy and targeted professional development activities.

Strategies:

1. Continue to deliver and evaluate targeted induction programs for new academic and sessional staff.
2. Provide targeted, ongoing professional development to enhance the teaching, assessment and curriculum design skills of academic and sessional staff.
3. Provide professional development for leaders of learning and teaching, particularly Directors of Academic Programs and Academic Course Advisors.
4. Align academic staff support with the UWS Academic Standards and Assessment Framework and School curriculum enhancement priorities.
5. Review the promotion policy to ensure that academic staff are appropriately recognized and rewarded for scholarly leadership in learning and teaching.

6. Develop and implement an academic staff career development framework that includes support for academic staff pursuing teaching-focussed roles and guidelines for collegial peer review of teaching and curriculum.
7. Expand UWS's success rate in the Commonwealth Office for Learning and Teaching grants and awards scheme.
8. Cultivate opportunities to share good practice and innovations in learning and teaching across UWS.

Performance Measures:

1. School, course and unit performance as evidenced through Annual Course Review indicators
2. Proportion of academic staff promotions on the basis of scholarly leadership in learning and teaching
3. Proportion of academic staff in each School engaged in peer review of teaching and curriculum
4. Proportion of academic staff in each School who have completed the Foundations of University Learning and Teaching program or equivalent

Key Performance indicator:

1. Student satisfaction with quality of experience at unit level (Student Feedback on Units)
2. Student ratings on the quality of their course experience (Course Experience Questionnaire), including good teaching and generic skills ratings

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