



VICE CHANCELLOR'S TRANSITION AND RETENTION TASKFORCE

CONFIRMED MINUTES

A meeting of the VC's Transition and Retention Taskforce was held on **Wednesday 17th August 2022**, from **10.00 to 11.30 am** via **Zoom**

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 Welcome

Professor Simon Bedford (Chair) opened the meeting, welcomed members and guests, and acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land.

Attendees

Professor Simon Bedford, PVC Learning Futures (Chair)
Natalie Bradbury, Director, Student Retention & Success
Michael Burgess, Chief Student Experience Officer
Associate Professor Jo-Anne Chuck, Head of Teaching and Curriculum, Learning Futures
Dr Colin Clark, Project Officer, Learning Futures
Debra Farrelly, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student and University Planning
Nikki Meller, Deputy Head, Technology Enabled Learning
Dr Caterina Tannous, Director of Undergraduate Health Science Program & STARS/START Academic Lead

1.2 Invitees

There were no invitees to this meeting.

1.3 Apologies

No apologies were received

1.4 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2022 were accepted without revision.

1.5 Action sheet from previous meeting

To assist members with monitoring and controlling the work of the Committee, the current action sheet (incorporating items arising from previous meetings) was discussed.

2 GENERAL BUSINESS

2.1 Revision of the 2021 Transition and Retention Strategy (Associate Professor Jo-Anne Chuck)

The 2021 Transition and Retention (T&R) Strategy is currently being updated (e.g., change in language/acronyms and removal of projects no longer operationalised), with an Executive Committee report being written as requested by the Senior DVC, Professor Clare Pollock. This is to include a review of the Schools and the broader University's tactics for T&R of students in 2021–22 including other work supporting identified cohorts (e.g., International students). The report also aims to prioritise work for 2022–23. The Vice Chancellor has requested weekly reports on T&R.

The draft report was discussed including the importance of the strategy, the whole of university approach and the engagement with the Schools via Education Committee (ED). School based data had been obtained from ED reports and the discussion on T&R at ED (Aug 2022) elevated the importance of accessing information from non-School support services which had proven difficult.

It was noted that many of the tactics cited in the T&R Strategy are compliance requirements rather than initiatives, however as compliance is one of the drivers, it is appropriate to include within the suite of measures.

It was highlighted that the heat map associated with the table in the appendix of the paper only related to School reported prioritised tactics with non-school engagement indicated in a separate column and via examples.

The report now included the priorities reported by Schools, Learning Futures, Library, Education Partnerships and Quality, Western Success, STARS, and Welfare, Disability and Wellbeing Support, Office of Indigenous Leadership, and some input from the International Office. Impact and scale are much more difficult to determine.

It was discussed that the impacts of the tactics on reducing attrition are difficult to ascertain, as Schools often do not have metrics to determine this. The data are complex and require sophisticated learning analytics to demonstrate impact.

Together with the School discussions from ED, the Taskforce reflected on the most appropriate areas to focus T&R efforts in 2022/23. This included improving retention by improving the transition experience. It was raised that a "Student Success Centre" strategy document existed that outlined goals for Western and reports the number of students who do not progress past census, which is not captured in official government figures. Many universities have similar levels of drop-out before census, which offers an opportunity to change Western's engagement model to improve students' transition experience. It was however highlighted that a significant focus should remain on retention of continuing students.

Discussions then centred on data. Lifecycle data (Department of Education retention figures) currently exclude students who drop out before census, but these students represent an opportunity for retention. Current (2021) retention/attrition data are not yet available, and it was requested that appropriate subsets of data be provided (e.g., undergraduate and postgraduate retention data separately). Separate postgraduate data would be particularly useful for the PGX program and the Graduate Research School, in addition to general operational requirements.

The Taskforce were asked to review the T&R report to comment.

Action: All members to provide feedback on the draft T&R Strategy Report (distributed via Sharepoint) by the 18th August.

Action: Associate Professor Jo-Anne Chuck and Professor Simon Bedford to submit the completed report to the Senior DVC.

2.2 STARS/START coordination (Associate Professor Jo-Anne Chuck/ Professor Simon Bedford)

Dr Caterina Tannous has completed a business case for STARS coordinators to receive workload recognition for their work in the T&R. The DVC(A), Professor Simon Barrie, has agreed to fund the cost of this workload (10% in most cases), which will include activities such as advising academics on embedding transition support materials in their subjects and connecting academics for mentoring, support, and sharing of information.

Dr Tannous will be on long-service leave from August 29th, so cover for her STARS/START coordination duties will be arranged.

Action: Professor Simon Bedford to submit the final case for paid workload for STARS coordination to the DVC(A) for final approval.

3 Other Business

3.1 Students having difficulty contacting academics

Natalie Bradbury raised an issue that arose at a SAC meeting. Students have reported difficulty in contacting teaching staff and inconsistency between Schools in operationalise access. SEO survey data was quoted where 28% of students agreed that they cannot access their teachers when they have questions. It was discussed that this was an important issue and common negative feedback to Schools.

It was also noted that students' feedback can be unfair and not necessarily representative of general sentiment.

Consultation hours published in the learning guide were discussed however these did not always align with students' timetables. Considerations of booking system where students can negotiate a time with the academic were also discussed.

Action: Associate Professor Jo-Anne Chuck to add a consultation booking system as a strategy to the T&R Strategy document.

3 NEXT MEETING

3.1 The next meeting will be on Thursday September 15, 11.00 am–12.30 pm