Student Experience Strategy
2016-2020
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Student Experience Strategy

Purpose
Contemporary students are seeking an intellectually and socially stimulating learning environment, embedded in a research culture with a wealth of extracurricular experiences available to them (Universities Australia, 2014). Increasingly, students expect access to comprehensive and quality support services and innovative and flexible learning spaces, irrespective of whether their mode of study includes campus, blended learning and/or fully online experiences; further, the extent to which their time at university leads to desirable graduate outcomes is becoming a strong measure of the performance of an institution. Universities not only have a responsibility but also a necessity to produce well educated, resilient and capable graduates who are globally and culturally aware and connected.

Universities operate in an intensively competitive, dynamic and increasingly de-regulated global marketplace. The quality of an institution is recognised through international reputation, rankings and capacity to attract high quality staff but equally through its capacity to attract and retain quality students from all over the world. As a key determinant in student attraction, satisfaction, retention and ongoing connection to the institution, the student experience becomes more critical to the institution's value proposition and sustainability. It is therefore essential that the University of Tasmania develops and implements purposeful strategies to draw a diverse range of local, interstate and international students to the University as a destination of choice, and for the University to support students in their pursuit of desired educational and graduate outcomes.

Commissioned by the Student Experience Committee and unique in the Australian sector at that time, in 2012 the University of Tasmania developed the Student Experience Plan 2013-2015. The Student Experience Strategy (2016-2020) is informed by and builds upon these foundations.

Over the next four years, the Student Experience Strategy (2016-2020) will drive significant enhancements and performance improvements by focusing on five strategic pillars:

1. Build the capacity of students to engage in their university experience in ways that are both individually transformative and that build the social capital of the institution and broader community;

2. Support a diverse and dynamic university community through the provision of high quality environments, experiences and clear communication strategies that assist students to make connections with peers, support staff and the broader community;

3. Embed a suite of comprehensive and quality services for students that are integrated, responsive and focused on supporting students’ holistic wellbeing, academic success and engagement;

4. Facilitate rewarding and high impact experiences that enrich and extend students’ program of study/academic journey, including leadership, international exchange, work based learning and civic engagement;

5. Strengthen the partnership between students and the University through conversations, co-creation and celebration.
In alignment with the University Retention and Success Strategy (2015-2017), these strategic pillars are underpinned by the following principles:

- **A comprehensive student lifecycle approach:** This strategy is developed from a student lifecycle approach, recognising that success can be best enabled through access to a full range of student support programs and commences from the point of recruitment and first contact with the University, through to transition to the University, progression in academic studies and the student support and experience that enables success, through to graduation.

- **A whole of institution responsibility:** This strategy acknowledges that student experience, retention and success are the responsibility of all staff and organisational units of the University, with each area embedding clear implementation plans resulting from this Strategy.

- **An evidence-based approach:** This strategy requires the provision of timely and relevant data relating to engagement with study and the broader student experience, and in that context recognises the need for a coordinated approach to student feedback, reviews, benchmarking and evaluation.

- **An approach which promotes inclusion and connection:** This strategy recognises activities should encourage all students to collaborate and engage with their peers, with staff and the broader community in order to build their sense of belonging and maximise opportunities for success and graduate outcomes.

**Defining the Student Experience**

The idea of the ‘student experience’ as an identifiable set of interconnected activities to be institutionally managed is a relatively new concept (Temple, Callender, Grove and Kersh, 2014). The term itself continues to have multiple meanings with the boundary between the learning and teaching experience and those aspects of the university life which inevitably impact the learning experience being imprecise.

In defining ‘the student experience’, we suggest a degree of uniformity that does not exist in practice (Temple et al, 2014); in reality a student’s journey is intrinsically unique to each person, is influenced by the person’s journey prior to study and whether a student is on a pre-degree or VET pathway, studying an undergraduate or postgraduate course or has progressed to higher degree research. However for the purpose of defining the student experience to underpin the strategy, it is reasonable to focus on commonly accepted patterns related to the student lifecycle that the institution has some potential to influence.
Thus for the purposes of the Student Experience Strategy (2016-2020) we have broadly adopted a scope drawn from a recent Higher Education Academy (2014) study which includes four components of the experience:

- **The initial transition experience:** The experience of prospective students as they engage with the institution for the first time to the point of arrival and transitioning through the first year of study irrespective of the entry level.

- **The academic experience:** Student interactions with the institution associated with their studies that align with the formal learning and teaching environment, which is addressed in the University of Tasmania Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan.

- **The student life experience:** Student engagement with the broader student life including those activities that may take place beyond the institution (referred to by the Higher Education Academy as the 'campus life').

- **The graduate experience:** The institution’s role in supporting the student to transition into employment and work based opportunities and retaining Alumni connections.

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**The University of Tasmania Commitment**

Open to Talent: Strategic Plan 2012-onwards articulates the commitment of the University of Tasmania to cater to an expanded and increasingly diverse student cohort. As the only university in the State, the University of Tasmania is committed to providing access to higher education and an equitable and inclusive experience for all students, regardless of background, country of origin, cultural identity, gender or sexual orientation.

The Student Experience Strategy (2016-2020) draws from and expands upon the University's Strategic Plan in a number of ways. It reinforces our commitment to students to provide access to excellent student support and guidance services, regardless of their location and mode of study. It reaffirms the value of interaction and connection between peers and with staff outside the formal learning and teaching environment and as such, highlights the importance of the design of physical and virtual spaces to facilitate informal interaction.

The Strategy reinforces that diversity and quality of student accommodation and catering options contribute to the vibrancy of campus life and that there is a key role for leadership programs, clubs, societies and social activities in the development of interpersonal, leadership and employability skills. Finally, the Student Experience Strategy (2016-2020) highlights the value of participation in the holistic student experience through civic and community engagement, international experiences, employment and work integrated learning and that through such opportunities, students are supported to make new connections and reach into spaces outside the traditional learning environment where the most rewarding learning experiences can take place.
Diversity of Student Cohort

In considering the provision of a high quality student experience, it is imperative that the University identifies the specific needs of different cohorts and creates pathways to connect these students as a community while supporting their individual needs. Specifically the attainment of growth targets in relation to cohorts such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, international students and students with previously low levels of education attainment relies upon appropriately nuanced student-centred strategies. Furthermore, this consideration extends to whether students are accessing study through blended and fully online modes of delivery.

Importantly, the University of Tasmania has a unique relationship to the State and shares responsibility for lifting educational attainment of Tasmanians. The University is deeply committed to ensuring that as many Tasmanians as possible are able to acquire the knowledge and qualifications they need for the jobs of today and the future, and believe this is key to a more skilled, productive and prosperous community.

A number of sub-groups of Tasmanians remain under-represented within the University student population. These include students from Tasmania's regional areas, low socio-economic or first-in-family backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Such cohorts of students also have lower rates of progression and completion than the broader student body and therefore demonstrates a compelling need to ensure that support to underpin the student experience of these groups are explicit and culturally appropriate. Such principles apply equally to a range of sub-groups including, but not limited to students with disabilities and students identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and/or Asexual.

The distinct academic and social needs of international students are also considered in the Strategy. Capitalising on our increasingly strong global standing, the University has been pursuing aggressive international growth targets in recent years. Welcoming greater numbers of international students to Tasmania provides significant benefit to the institution and the State by enriching the community intellectually, socially, culturally and economically, however, the success of student settlement in, and engagement with the community must be intentionally facilitated and supported by the University.
Pillar 1: Build the capacity of students to engage in their university experience in ways that are both individually transformative and build the social capital of the institution and the broader community

Strategy 1.1
Embedding and promoting the pre-degree and pathway framework including the supports that underpin them to enable wider participation in the University

ACTIONS
Create greater visibility and clarity regarding pathways options to higher education inclusive of the University College, University Connect and High Achiever programs
Drawing on the University’s existing first year support model, develop and promote more rigorous first year and retention framework focused specifically on the academic transition and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

RESPONSIBILITY
PVC (Academic Quality and Schools Engagement)
Principal University College
PVC (Global, Marketing and Recruitment)
ED Student Experience
PVC (Aboriginal Research and Leadership)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Documented Pre-degree and Pathways Framework
Strategy 1.2
Ensure the institution-wide Curriculum Review considers and implements best practice approaches to enabling access to higher education and the academic and development needs of a diverse student cohort

ACTIONS
Contribute to the implementation of the University's curriculum renewal process with specific focus on value add extensions to the curriculum including breadth, opportunities for leadership, service and experiential learning

RESPONSIBILITY
PVC (Learning and Teaching)
Executive Deans
Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Evidence of increasing student engagement in breadth opportunities embedded within curriculum

Strategy 1.3
Embed a diverse range of student wellbeing and equity initiatives which promote quality engagement and facilitates connections

ACTIONS
Develop and promote an annual schedule of a diverse suite of health, wellbeing and active initiatives that are accessible and inclusive to wide demographic of students studying through different modes of delivery
Strengthen mechanisms to undertake preventative education, cultural change, reporting, monitoring and response to incidents of harassment and assault

RESPONSIBILITY
PVC (Culture and Wellbeing)
ED Student Experience

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Evidence of Institutional Wellbeing Framework and Mental Health Strategy
Evidence of response to AHRC 10 point Plan and development of local action plan

Strategy 1.4
Deliver a comprehensive program of orientation and welcome events that considers individual and cohort needs, and facilitates the five senses of success as captured in the University First Year Framework

ACTIONS
Continue to improve and embed a model for the coordination and delivery of orientation that is appropriately nuanced to diverse student cohort and discipline needs, geography and/or mode of study

RESPONSIBILITY
ED Student Experience
PVC (Global, Marketing and Recruitment)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Evidence of documented First Year Framework
Pillar 2: Support a diverse and dynamic University community through the provision of high quality environments, experiences and clear communication strategies that assist students to make connections with peers, support staff and the broader community

Strategy 2.1
Ensure consideration and prioritisation of the student experience is explicitly included and documented in capital investment and campus space planning initiatives

**ACTIONS**
- Ensure the Student Experience Committee has formal mechanisms for input into the Northern and Southern Master Planning projects
- Standardise process for including and analysing broad student input into emerging capital works projects
- Strengthen channels for student input into prioritisation of IT investments that enhance the student experience

**RESPONSIBILITY**
- ED Infrastructure Services and Development
- Chief Information Officer
- ED Student Experience

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**
- Documented Southern and Northern Development Plans which prioritise student experience

Strategy 2.2
Ensure that the University is well placed to provide high quality library and support services

**ACTIONS**
- Establish an integrated student centred building in the Hobart City precinct to enhance the student experience, which includes library and student services and incorporates informal learning and social spaces
- Ensure library and student services on the Sandy Bay campus are relocated to a consolidated and fit for purpose location
- Ensure infrastructure planning for Northern Developments include identification of site for world class student and library service spaces and facilities

**RESPONSIBILITY**
- ED Student Experience
- University Librarian
- ED Infrastructure Services and Development

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**
- Evidence of plans for single fit for purpose student and library centre locations in each major precinct

Strategy 2.3
Enhance and strengthen the promotion of the University’s residential culture and its role in contributing to the vibrancy of the broader University environment

**ACTIONS**
- Re-vision a model for access to and provision of student experience and support in purpose built student accommodation with a specific focus on improving the value proposition of living on campus and supporting the University’s strategies for international and domestic growth
- Enhance the quality of information and presentation of welcome resources which promotes experience, facilities and support to prospective and newly arrived international and domestic students

**RESPONSIBILITY**
- PVC (Global, Marketing and Recruitment)
- ED Student Experience

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**
- Evidence of Student Living Strategy (2018-2020)
Strategy 2.4

Embed a diverse range of quality engagement opportunities for students which facilitate peer connections including social events, sports and recreational experiences

**ACTIONS**

Establish a suite of high quality marketable hard copy and web-based resources which packages and better promotes social, sport, recreation and engagement opportunities to newly arrived and current students

Strengthen the partnership between the University, Sports Council and endorsed sporting clubs to support their business sustainability, generation of funding and participation rates

Develop a strategy for the routine audit of condition and usage of University sporting grounds and facilities and clear process for determining priority of upgrades

**RESPONSIBILITY**

ED Student Experience
Director Student Life
ED Infrastructure Services and Development
ED Advancement

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

UTASLife and Sports Brand established
University of Tasmania Sports Fund launched
Evidence of annual audit report and strategy to support upgrades of sports grounds and facilities
Pillar 3:
Embed a suite of comprehensive and quality services for students that are integrated, responsive and focused on supporting students’ holistic wellbeing, academic success and engagement

Strategy 3.1
Embed consistently high standard of service provision across all institutional services and facilities

**ACTIONS**
Enhance the University’s model for first and second tier student enquiries, information and advice supported by enhanced technology to improve student and staff experience and business efficiency
Establish single fit for purpose student service hubs on all major campuses/precincts
Conduct annual student service quality survey and student experience survey and table results at SEC for analysis and action
Embed and create visibility of the student experience evaluation (survey and feedback) framework for monitoring overall performance

**RESPONSIBILITY**
ED Student Experience
ED Strategy
ED Infrastructure Services and Development
Chief Operating Officer
University Librarian

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**
Implementation of new first tier student service model for enquiries and information
Evidence of annual schedule of approved student surveys and mechanisms for analysis and action through SEC
Pillar 4:
Facilitate rewarding and high impact experiences that enrich and extend students’ program of study and academic journey, including leadership and civic engagement

Strategy 4.1
Coordinate, expand and strengthen promotion of opportunities for on-campus, student employment

ACTIONS
Develop a database to record and measure institution-wide work based, experiential and employment opportunities
Ensure the University has an equitable, quality assured recruitment and employment procedure for students undertaking internships, paid and unpaid employment within the institution

RESPONSIBILITY
ED Student Experience
PVC (Learning and Teaching)
Principal University College
ED Human Resources

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Evidence of documentation and application of procedures and practices related to on-campus work opportunities
Strategy 4.2
Enhance opportunities for work integrated and experiential learning experiences within the University and broader community

ACTIONS
In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, develop a University framework for defining, coordinating and promoting the range of experiential and work based learning opportunities for students

Work with internal University stakeholders and wide range of external partners to develop an institutional database of industry, government and community groups interested in partnering with the University to provide industry / work based learning opportunities

RESPONSIBILITY
ED Student Experience
PVC (Learning and Teaching)
Principal University College
Executive Deans
Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching)
Dean of Graduate Research

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Evidence of work integrated and experiential learning framework and database development and implementation

Strategy 4.3
Ensure students are recognised for participating in high impact experiences that build and evidence graduate capabilities including leadership, peer learning and volunteering opportunities

ACTIONS
Ensure wide promotion of the Vice Chancellor’s Leadership Program and encourage high engagement with breadth units embedded in the curriculum

RESPONSIBILITY
PVC (Learning and Teaching)
ED Student Experience
Executive Deans
Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching)

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Incremental increase in numbers of breadth and VCLP participants

Strategy 4.4
Expand international exchange opportunities for students that are complementary to and embedded in curricular

ACTIONS
Expand the number and range of partners to enable more opportunities for international exchange opportunities

Establish a clear funding model and scholarship packages for supporting greater access to international exchange

RESPONSIBILITY
PVC (Global, Marketing and Recruitment)
Executive Deans

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Incremental increase in numbers of students undertaking international exchange

Evidence of work integrated and experiential learning framework and database development and implementation
Pillar 5: Strengthen the partnership between students and the University through conversations, co-creation and celebration

Strategy 5.1
Provide multiple mechanisms and opportunities for students to provide feedback on their University experience, ensure outcomes are widely promoted to students and stakeholders and impact on institutional decision making

ACTIONS
Facilitate and promote the suite of complementary student surveys (QILT and locally developed) which evaluate all aspects of the student experience and table results at SEC for assessment and action
Enhance engagement with surveys and other feedback mechanisms including promotion of results and outcomes to students and other relevant stakeholders
Review on an ongoing basis the modes, timing and structure of key student forums to expand mechanisms to capture the diverse nature of the student voice
Continue to develop BI student experience dashboards which provides stakeholder access to student survey results

RESPONSIBILITY
ED Student Experience
Executive Deans
PVC (Learning and Teaching)
Principal University College
Dean of Graduate Research

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Implement surveys website to increase visibility of results and outcomes
Enhance access to student BI dashboards for utilisation of Academic Colleges and Divisions

Strategy 5.2
Ensure that student representation in University governance is meaningful, effective and informed to ensure high impact on strategic decision making

ACTIONS
Embed a professional development and training package for student representatives to assist them to prepare for and effectively contribute to governance structures
Widely promote formal mechanisms to recognise student leadership as complementary to formal study including, but not exclusively VCLP
Review on an ongoing basis the modes, timing and structure of key student forums to expand mechanisms to capture the diverse nature of the student voice

RESPONSIBILITY
ED Student Experience

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Evidence of Student Representative Council and leadership training programs