

University of Western Sydney

Action Plan for Learning & Teaching 2006 - 2008

Purpose

To achieve the successful implementation of evidence-based development priorities for learning and teaching over the period 2006-2008. This plan focuses on agreed University-wide initiatives and complements the specific initiatives identified in the Colleges' strategic plans for 2006 – 2008.

Key indicators of successful implementation of the plan include:

- a 5% improvement in the 2005 benchmarked scores on the CEQ's Overall Satisfaction, Appropriate Assessment and Good Teaching Scales by the end of 2007;
- a 3% improvement in retention at the University level by the end of 2007;
- a 5% improvement in UG demand for each year 2006-8 (i.e. a 15% increase after three years);
- a 5% increase per annum in fee-paying EFTSL (both PG and International) 2006-8 (i.e. 15% increase after three years).

Underlying principles

The action plan is based on key principles of effective strategic change management and implementation in higher education:

The plan will:

- be consistent with the fundamental framework of the UWS Strategic Plan and Mission, and the UWS Teaching and Learning Plan (Attachment One);
- adopt a staged approach to implementation with an annual planning and review cycle;
- use criterion based evaluation against proven principles of productive learning and teaching in higher education;
- achieve greater consistency in use of those strategies known to optimise student retention and engagement in productive learning at UWS.

The priorities for action will:

- be evidence-based;
- draw from multiple sources of evidence;
- be relevant to the UWS context (e.g. based on what we know engages UWS students in productive learning and retains them);
- be consistent with the key mission, values and objectives of UWS;
- be distinctive (e.g. they will favourably position UWS in an increasingly competitive environment by achieving consistency in the use of proven approaches in different fields of education);
- be feasible (that is, achievable, deliverable within available resources).

The UWS goal of sustainability will be supported through:

- emphasising systems thinking and development;
- carefully selecting leaders and members of action teams;

- leveraging specialist professional support services in the establishment of cross-functional project teams for each action project in the L&T Agenda;
- directing collective action to where the effort has greatest chance of having the most positive impact and being sustained;
- building on and adapting what is already known to be working, both here and elsewhere, and supporting the scale-up of successful initiatives in action areas across the university;
- identifying and resolving obstacles (e.g. workload policies need to reflect the transformation from a focus on a, traditional, classroom-based teacher focus to a more multifaceted, multiple-mode, learner-centred approach).

Successful implementation will be supported by:

- providing teams with frameworks and guidelines for project management and evaluation;
- providing relevant and timely specialist support to staff engaged in action projects;
- enabling staff to engage in activities (e.g. through workload allocations that make projects mainstream rather than marginal tasks);
- supporting the development of a network of leaders through the action projects which be used as a subsequent staff development resource for each development area.

Project outcomes will be disseminated by:

- developing a common, clearly defined language to describe key developments like “blended learning”;
- supporting face-to-face opportunities for sharing of initiatives and the learning associated with them, for example, through UWS-wide and College and School-based “market” days and forums;
- using the UWS Heads of Program Network to test solutions and promote the ones which work amongst their staff;
- consistently publicising and celebrating outcomes and achievements across UWS;
- leveraging project achievements to gain positive external publicity of what UWS is achieving in the area.

Priorities for the Development of Learning and Teaching 2006-2008

These priorities are based on a detailed analysis of strategic and performance information including:

- the UWS Teaching and Learning Plan 2004-8 (Attachment One);
- the outcomes of the BOT Strategy day 2005;
- a consolidated analysis of performance on a wide range of UWS surveys and other tracking data (<http://www.uws.edu.au/about/adminorg/corpserv/opq/surveys>) discussed at the September 2005 Quality Forum attended by more than 140 UWS senior and middle managers in September 2005 (Attachment Two); and
- the November *Vital Signs* Report for UWS (Attachment Three).

Themes

Five priority L&T development themes have emerged. These are based on a detailed, triangulated analysis of all of the key sources of information listed above. Within each priority theme, a range of action projects is proposed.

Our research shows that if each priority theme area identified is addressed consistently and effectively through focused action projects across UWS, there will be a significant improvement in the KPIs listed in Attachment Three. A core KPI which will be used to test that the Action Plan is working is Retention.

These priority development themes for 2006-2008 and their associated action projects are not only evidence-based but are feasible, as they build on the pockets of excellent practice already underway in UWS in every area identified. The themes are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRANSITIONS: 	<p>Supporting the transitions in learning for students as they enter the University via multiple pathways (e.g. TAFE, international articulation), and progress through stages in their learning through to employment or further study</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FLEXIBLE & BLENDED LEARNING: 	<p>Creating a more flexible and responsive learning environment with the optimum blend of learning pathways, appropriate learning methods, times, locations and support to optimise retention and productive learning. IT-enabled learning is important as a component of this mix.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGED LEARNING: 	<p>Embedding more consistent integration and inter-connections across learning, work and community contexts (academic service learning, co-operative programs, work-based learning, overseas study)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: 	<p>Designing and implementing assessment tools that are fair, relevant and transparent, that are integrated with learning resources, and that engage students with their professional and/or disciplinary futures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENABLING INITIATIVES: 	<p>Ensuring that effective systems are available to enable and support initiatives in the above priority areas</p>

This plan is for action to commence immediately. There are, however, much broader and more radical options which are the subject of ongoing discussions.

Action projects

The recommended L&T action areas for 2006 based on the above evidence are listed in Table 1 with an indicative leader and team, along with provisional future project ideas for 2007 and 2008.

Table 2: Learning and Teaching Action Projects 2006-2008

Priority Theme	Action Projects	2006	2007	2008	Leader(s)
TRANSITIONS	Consistent provision of course advice to students	✓			Stuart Campbell
	Transition to first year	✓			Ellen Brackenreg
	Transition for TAFE students	✓			Stuart Campbell & Ellen Brackenreg
	Transition for onshore International students	✓			Kent Goldsworthy
	Consolidating research methods units		✓		Nigel Bond, A/Deans (R)
	Successful Graduate Projects x Field of Education		✓	✓	
	Supporting students through first year teaching teams	✓	✓		Robyn McGuiggan, Alan McPhail, Betty Gill, Steven Riley, Ellen Brackenreg
FLEXIBLE & BLENDED LEARNING	Courseware standards for self-managed learning	✓	✓		EDC
	Consistent e-learning support	✓	✓		EDC
	Institutional evaluation of e-learning experience	✓	✓	✓	EDC
ENGAGED LEARNING	More extensive and integrated use of practice-based, problem-oriented learning, and learning through community service	✓			Wayne McKenna, A/Deans (A), A/Deans (D&E), Margaret Vickers
	Promoting existing Community Engagement-oriented units through course advice to students	✓			Wayne McKenna, A/Deans (A), Stuart Campbell
	Internationalisation of the curriculum		✓		International Strategy and Policy Committee, Regional Reference Groups, A/Deans (A)
	Indigenous perspectives in curriculum		✓		Nigel Bond, Director Indigenous Australian Education
ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING	External moderation of assessment				Stuart Campbell
	Assessment-focussed unit outlines	✓			Stuart Campbell
	Assessing less and assessing better: Rationalisation of assessment across majors and key programs		✓		Nigel Bond, Stuart Campbell
	Assuring consistent assessment standards, feedback & marking	✓			Nigel Bond, Stuart Campbell

Priority Theme	Action Projects	2006	2007	2008	Leader(s)
ENABLING INITIATIVES	Online enrolments & fees	✓	✓		Thea Seabrook with Sophie Clark
	UWS query & complaints management system	✓	✓		Geoff Scott with Linda Watson
	Revised policies on course accreditation and assessment	✓	✓		Anne Cusick
	Online course accreditation project				Anne Cusick, Athula Ginige
	Unit Outlines Repository	✓			Liz Curach, Stuart Campbell,
	More consistently exploiting the UWS Online Library	✓	✓		Liz Curach
	UWS Students' Guide to Units of Study	✓			A/Deans (A) led by Peter Hutchings
	Staff Continuing Professional Development in Learning and Teaching	✓	✓		EDC
	Systematic identification & dissemination of successful learning methods	✓	✓		Nigel Bond, A/Deans (A), Geoff Scott
	Review of UWS excellence awards to align with national Carrick Awards	✓			EDC
	Incentives and rewards for team achievements in learning and teaching	✓	✓	✓	Deans through the Course Performance Fund
	Scaling up proven ways of delivering a quality service culture at UWS	✓	✓		Liz Curach
	Consistent implementation of key improvement priorities from UWS Research Student Satisfaction Survey	✓	✓		PVC Research, A/Deans (R), Chair Research Studies Cttee

Project Management & achieving successful implementation of the plan

Each named project will operate under an agreed project management plan. This will include a clear leader, cross-functional team, timeline, set of deliverables and project delivery, evaluation and dissemination strategy.

All project plans will be uploaded to the “Quality management at UWS” section of the UWS website.

The sponsors of the L&T Action Plan will be the PVC (Academic) and the PVC (Quality).

Senate Education Committee will be responsible for the fulfilment of the Plan, including:

- Commissioning projects;
- Establishing timelines;
- Establishing project guidelines;
- Endorsing project teams;
- Annual review and reshaping of the Plan;
- Reporting project outcomes to Senate

Oversight of the progress of individual projects will be the joint responsibility of the Director, Educational Development Centre and the Associate PVC (Planning & Quality).

Engagement with the University teaching and learning community will be achieved through interaction and involvement with the Head of Program network and forum.

Attachment One

UWS Learning & Teaching Plan 2004-8

The Learning & Teaching Action projects identified for 2006 - 2008 are aligned with the overall UWS Plan for L&T 2004-2008. In particular, the projects align most closely with the following goals and strategies from the Plan:

- Goal 1 Provide distinctive, professionally oriented and flexible academic programs**
- Develop the professional orientation of academic programs.
 - Pursue a targeted growth strategy to enhance flexibility through e-learning
 - Ensure that assessment practices in academic programs support and enhance student learning.
- Goal 2 Enhance the University's reputation for educational excellence and scholarship in teaching resulting from the professionalism of staff and their commitment to students**
- Implement a teaching development program to encourage innovation and scholarship in teaching and to enhance the nexus between teaching, research and regional and community engagement.
 - Recognise and reward excellence and scholarship in teaching.
- Goal 3 Ensure a diverse student profile, and increase higher education participation rates of people from Greater Western Sydney**
- Improve higher education opportunities and support for disadvantaged students from GWS.
 - Develop strong outreach links with schools and community organizations to encourage aspirations to higher education in Greater Western Sydney (GWS)
- Goal 4 Provide a high quality, student-centred experience at UWS to improve student success and graduation rates**
- Develop an institution-wide project aimed at enhancing the student experience and improving student retention beyond the first year.
 - Promote inclusiveness for all students in the educational, cultural, and social life of the University.
 - Provide an accessible and service oriented environment to enhance the quality and flexibility of students' learning experiences at UWS.
 - Foster a climate of openness and responsiveness to student feedback.
 - Recognise and promote academic excellence and the development of students' leadership capabilities.
- Goal 5 Ensure that UWS students 'learn to learn', and graduate with the ability to participate actively and responsibly in a diverse and changing world**
- Define graduate outcomes for academic programs, and map their integration into program development, delivery, evaluation and review.
 - Enhance the breadth and diversity of students' educational experience, to ensure they achieve the graduate attributes.
 - Increase collaborations between Colleges and Schools and support services to ensure coherent development of generic and program-specific graduate attributes.

Attachment Two 2005 UWS Quality Forum Groups and Focus Areas

Below the focus groups which identified key ways of addressing the 2006 Action Plan for L&T at the September 2005 Quality Forum are listed with details of the key focus points addressed for each element of the Action Plan. A detailed summary of their key recommendations for action are available at:

<http://www.uws.edu.au/staff/adminorg/corpserv/opq/smc>

L&T Action/Support Area	Discussion Group Membership	Key Focus
1. Implementing UWS Head of Program Network	Anne Cusick, Carmel Coady, Rob Coombes, Yaping He, Stuart Hill, Lynn Jackson, Alan McPhail, Robert Mellor Lynette Sheridan Burns, Meg Smith, Diana Whitton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The 3-4 critical tasks for HOPNet during 2006 b. Enhancing HOP work using the network c. How to achieve convenient and quick decisions d. Links between HOPNet & Academic Governance e. Immediate Action plans
2. Quality in Assessment: Assessment Standards	Nigel Bond, Keith Bennett, Shelly Burgin, Meg Boness, Mac Collings, Mark Croucher, Adelma Hills, Dennis Mortimer, Kate Roth, Jan Ryan, Ana Smith, Phil Costley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How to enhance assessment integrity & deter plagiarism b. Measuring effectiveness of these techniques c. Ensuring consistent take up of these techniques d. Assuring assessment is consistently at a university standard e. How can we improve feedback quality? f. Managing assessment of group projects
3. Quality in Assessment: Assessing less & better	Carolyn Webb, John Daly, Richard Fletcher, Ewa Huebner, Godfrey Isouard, Carol Liston, Sharyn McGee, Graham Miller, George Rosier, Carolyn Sappideen, Paul Wormell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Avoiding assessing the same thing in different units of study b. Minimising quantity but maximising quality of assessment c. Assuring consistency d. Addressing different student backgrounds e. Conveying this approach to students f. Promoting more integrated and problem-based assessment
4. Quality in Assessment: Assessment focused unit outlines	Robyn McGuiggan, Trevor Bailey, Pauline Bayliss, Cecily Hengstberger-Sims Sudir Lodh, Mark Norman, Swapan Saha, Ivan Skaines, Jan Temple, Jeff Warnock, Sarah Waterson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Mainstreaming via workloads & unit review b. Trialing and fine-tuning experimental outlines c. Disseminating & replicating good practice d. Determining trial success
5. Quality in Research: Actioning key findings from the UWS Research Student Satisfaction Survey	Michael Atherton, Sheila Shaver, Alan Bensoussan, Michael Darcy, Gar Jones, Janne Malfoy, Jo Milne-Home, Greg Noble, Janette Perz, Jane Hobson, Rajeev Kamineni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Addressing the gap between student expectations & UWS Minimum Resources Policy b. Systematic & timely provision of help c. Assisting more rapid degree completions
6. Retention Project A - Convenient & Efficient Enrolment	Shaneen McGlinchey, Kanora Chhan, Diane Dwyer, Rhonda Hawkins, Kim Johnston, Graeme Mitchell, Rob Mulley, Steve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why is initial enrolment important to students? b. Where are the student stress points c. Actions to improve this: OAR/College

	Riley, Genevieve Watson, Karen Yevenes, Alec Doran, Bob Phillips	interface
7. Retention Project B - More effective student advice	Stuart Campbell, Ellen Brackenreg, Antonio Castillo, Sophie Clarke, Susan Hudson, Angelo Kourtis, Kym Morris, Brian Pinkstone, Margaret Skropeta, Steve Wilson, Mahsood Shah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Course Advice Program (CAP) b. Credit precedent database c. Elective packages d. Career pathways
8. Retention Project C - Online query tracking system	Thea Seabrook, Linda Watson, Susan Armstrong, Robyn Benjamin, Mark Cartwright, Mikael Kjaerbye, Sara Knox, Mary Mooney, Surendra Shrestha, Lesley Wilkes, Lee Zakrzewski, Kim Jarvis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Demonstration of UWS Complaints Management System b. Determining need for a query tracking system c. Which queries and responsibilities d. Key stakeholders for involvement
9. Retention Project D - More consistent & effective use of WebCT	Betty Gill, Ian Caddy, Mick Houlahan, Ian Knowd, Liwan Liyanage, Wayne McKenna, John Ryan, Mary Stamboulie, Gail Wilson, Tim Wills, Tony Pollard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Optimising consistent & effective use of WebCT as part of a broader flexible learning system b. Audit of current use of WebCT c. Review of user perceptions of WebCT d. Action plans
10. Retention Project E - Implementing Blended/Flexible Learning	Mick Wilson, Bruno Di Biase, Peter Hutchings, Priscilla Leece, Rosemary Nicholson, Roisin O'Reilly, Mick Serena, Catherine Sherlock, Christine WoodWoodrow, Neville Yeomans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Key methods to make learning more flexible and self-managed b. Key challenges to implementing blended learning c. Cost-benefits of BL d. How to encourage more systematic uptake of Blended and Flexible Learning approaches e. Key action steps
11. Quality of Service at UWS	Liz Curach, Sasha Alexander, Stephen Butcher, Gradydon Davidson, Kate Gunn, Keith Holley, Helen Lyons, Betsy Marks, Debra Moodie-Bain, Mike Webster, Eva Ing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What does service mean in a University? b. What does a service culture mean in practical terms? c. What practical steps need to be taken to improve the service ethos of UWS d. Key action steps