



Strategy: UWA Student Experience 'Experience UWA' Discussion Paper

Introduction

A world-class student experience is a central feature of Education at UWA. It should be a distinctive, inspiring, transformative, inclusive, opportunity rich, student-centred educative experience that exceeds the expectations of all students. UWA students are seeking an intellectually and socially stimulating ecosystem, embedded in a research culture with a wealth of curricular and co-curricular experiences available to them. The UWA experience needs to deliver students the knowledge, skills, networks and personal development to equip them as future global citizens and leaders in their chosen careers and community.

An outstanding UWA student experience forms the core deliverable of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) portfolio and underpins the design and delivery of activities to achieve globally, culturally aware and connected students. UWA needs to enhance the ability and build the capacity of students to engage in their university experience in ways that are individually transformative and also build the social capital of the university and community.

UWA students should have a personalised university experience that fits their individual needs in conjunction with teaching that will inspire, challenge and motivate.

Background

With the UWA Vision 2030 consultation process underway, the Student Experience Strategy will form an integral part of the Education Plan being developed under the leadership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education).

The strategic framework (Attachment 1) presented in this paper is based on the commonly accepted pattern of a university student 'lifecycle'¹ and involves factors in which an institution plays a role.



This lifecycle commences with outreach activities where potential students first engage with the university which then supports them through to successful university transition. The student then participates with the broader student life whilst progressing in their academic studies, until they graduate and transition into employment with Alumni connections. This strategic framework recognises that success is best enabled through access to a full range of student services and programs and where the student experience is regarded as a whole of institution responsibility. The proposed UWA Student Experience Strategy framework is built upon 6 *Key Pillars* which are underpinned by *Foundation Themes*.

The development of the framework is also being informed by data. A student profile detailing the various cohorts within the university student population has been created and will be used to inform development the strategy. A variety of datasets have been identified that will also guide the strategy and will help measure success. These include the Australian Government Department of Education and Training's Student Experience and Graduate Outcomes Surveys and the International Student Barometer.

¹ Bennett, A., Naylor, R., Mellor, K., Brett, M., Gore, J., Harvey, A., Munn, B., James, R., Smith, M. Whitty, G. (2015). The Critical Interventions Framework Part 2: Equity Initiatives in Australian Higher Education: A review of evidence of impact. Retrieved from https://www.newcastle.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/261124/REPORT-FINAL.pdf

Strategic Framework

The development process to date has included the creation of an overarching framework that has been produced in consultation with key stakeholders. Key stakeholders identified include representatives from the Education Portfolio, Brand, Marketing and Recruitment, Development and Alumni Relations, School of Indigenous Studies, Strategy Planning and Policy and UWA Student Guild and the University Library. Once the framework has been confirmed, consultation will be extended to engage UWA staff, students and external stakeholders, in line with the broader Vision 2030 strategic planning process.

Key Pillars

Six key pillars have been identified as underpinning the framework to attach strategies in the delivery of a transformative UWA student experience. They are:

- 1) Learning Opportunities
- 2) Digital Capability and Engagement
- 3) Student Wellbeing and Success
- 4) Vibrant and Connected Community
- 5) Career Development and Employability
- 6) Inclusive and Diversified Student Community

As a result of the consultation process, an additional pillar of Indigenous Knowledge has been proposed for consideration.

Learning Opportunities

UWA has the need to produce graduates with knowledge, skills and networks to build meaningful and agile careers that can be sustained and adapted over the course of their lifetime. Action-based, cross disciplinary learning opportunities that support and extend the curriculum to meet the learning expectations of a connected and entrepreneurial generation of digitally-minded learners will be required in the Student Experience Strategy.

Opportunities need to be tailored to meet the needs of different cohorts of students, at all stages of study, which focus on enhancing skill development in line with clearly articulated UWA graduate attributes. While many of these opportunities may sit outside of the traditional classroom, it is expected that the learning outcomes be integrated with mainstream curriculum or formally recorded and recognized in other ways.

Digital Capability and Engagement

Digital technologies have fundamentally altered the way students study, live and work and the expectation of personalised online services impact on what and how students choose to learn. To build a vibrant, practical and digitally-integrated environment that supports and enhances our campus, UWA must provide students with quality 'just in time' and 'just for me' services. A clever integration of virtual and person-facing resources is needed to service the complexity of students' enquiries.

Digital mediums are an important avenue through which personalised and responsive student engagement can be provided and this requires integrated student-facing systems and process which are streamlined and enhanced. This pillar also acknowledges that better use of existing university data can enhance the student experience by guiding the development of programs and informing early intervention strategies.

Student Well-being and Success

A holistic approach is required to promote student wellbeing and enhance academic success that is understood and embraced by the whole university community. Students expect staff to be knowledgeable and caring and to be able to effectively deal with issues in an efficient and effective way which ultimately leads to greater chance of success. The support provided and the services available needs to meet the needs of all engaged with the University and that the support services are integrated across the institution with all expectations managed and met.

It is expected that mental health and wellbeing will be a focus of the strategy and predictive modeling should be utilised to assist in the identification and support of students at risk. Students with concerns should be identified as early as possible through early alert initiatives and connected to supportive resources and services.

Mentoring programs are an effective way to help students manage the challenges and stresses associated with university study. There are many approaches to mentoring, such as peer mentoring, specialist career mentoring, academic mentoring and external mentoring (community, alumni) that are currently utilised across the university and these will be further explored during consultation of the strategy.

Vibrant and Connected Community

This pillar strives to facilitate the creation of lifetime connections to the university, and acknowledges that creating a vibrant and connected community needs to incorporate both the physical campus and online mediums. It also recognises that community can be formed on a range of characteristics, whether it's cohort, by discipline or associated with residential living. A sense of belonging to the university can be achieved through communities that have a critical mass, but are not too large that a personalised experience cannot be achieved.

A 'sticky campus' engages students in curricular and extracurricular activities by offering convenient transport, services and a variety of cultural, vocational, recreational and social pursuits. Research suggests that universities that engage students in clubs, sports, cultural offerings, internships, part-time jobs and volunteering foster greater student success. Volunteering is of increasing importance to students and in the development of any initiatives a community need approach should be considered. Activities should be supported by spaces on campus where students feel comfortable and have access to high quality recreation sport areas, good and diverse food and beverage offerings, comfortable place to meet and socialize and excellent individual and group study areas.

The campus community and its assets should be open to a diverse range of community, arts, sports, business partners and collaborators. Universities are increasingly creating new spaces which enhance community-business-industry collaboration and provide flexible spaces for project work associated with entrepreneurial and other collaborative ventures and UWA needs to consider opportunities. In addition, a growing number of primarily digital brands such as Airbnb and Amazon are now placing greater emphasis on physical presence while making the most of digital and data to improve experience. New technologies can make the campus even more important and relevant provided that they evolve in parallel and give students the opportunity to use their on-campus time more productively.

Career Development and Employability

By virtue of its history in Western Australia, UWA has as an enduring and established brand and the Student Experience Strategy needs to recognise the importance of producing graduates with the capabilities for a lifelong career. Students are seeking an assurance that their time at university will lead to a career and often graduate outcomes are seen as an indicator of the quality of an institution. UWA has a responsibility to produce highly educated, well rounded and qualified graduates who are globally competitive, culturally aware and connected. UWA students need to understand their strengths, know how to effectively articulate their value to employers, and graduate with the confidence and insight to turn their aspirations into reality.

This pillar needs to focus on articulating a consistent career development process that is applied across the university and supported by the curriculum and other activities and one where industry engagement opportunities are provided for students across all stages of study. It will include initiatives to enhance opportunities for work integrated learning (WIL) experiences within the University and broader community. Students should be presented with multiple opportunities to undertake leadership activities, service learning, peer learning and volunteering and that these activities are recognized as evidence of graduate capabilities.

Inclusive and Diversified Student Community

This pillar is focused on strategies that increase the diversity within our student population and supports students from diverse backgrounds to achieve their university goals. This includes domestic students from identified equity groups such as students with disabilities, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students from regional and remote areas of Australia.

The distinct academic and social needs of international students are also considered in the strategy. By capitalising on our increasingly strong global standing, the University has been pursuing aggressive international growth targets in recent years. These growth targets need to be supported by strategies which provide an excellent UWA student experience, resulting in success.

Engagement with the communities in regional WA to enhance educational and student experience opportunities for WA communities outside of Perth, such as our campus in Albany, should be explored in the strategy. Other forms of the university community include the University's residential colleges and their role in contributing to the vibrancy of the University and supporting students from diverse backgrounds.

Indigenous Knowledge

This proposed pillar will have dual focus: to support university access and success for Indigenous students as distinct to other cohort of students and secondly, to promote and celebrate Indigenous knowledge and culture across all aspects of student experience for the benefit of all students. By having a distinct pillar, UWA recognizes the importance of our indigenous history and that indigenous matters be considered both in the horizontal and vertical axis. The strategy needs to consider how it can ensure Aboriginal students have a positive UWA

experience and also ensure that all students gain an appreciation of Aboriginal people, culture and knowledge throughout their university study.

Foundation Themes

The strategic framework has proposed four Foundation Themes which are embedded in everything we do and which run horizontally across all strategic pillars. These are:

1. Student Centric Approach
2. Celebration of success
3. Inclusivity
4. Institutional Alignment

Student Centric Approach

Students need to remain in the forefront in both strategy development and implementation. Central to this is the development of an end-to-end approach where activities are tailored to meet the various cohorts of students, at all stages of study. A culture of collaboration with students is also important. Strong, active and meaningful student representation in the planning and implementation of activities is critical in the success of the UWA Student Experience.

Celebrating Success

Students and staff should be encouraged, and recognized for high levels of ambition, motivation, energy and success in all aspects of student activity, whether academic or extra-curricular. The strategy needs to ensure that the institution recognizes best practice and various levels of achievements and that this highlighted (internally and externally) and celebrated.

Inclusivity

The principle of inclusivity is strongly aligned to core UWA values of diversity and respect with the university being an institution that welcomes, accepts and embraces a diverse student population; supporting all students to achieve their full potential. This should be embedded across all pillars of this strategy with Aboriginal student needs and Australian Indigenous knowledge, in particular being prioritized and celebrated across all pillars and activities.

A diverse student body brings a rich variety of worldviews, perspectives and cultures to our university that can be better harnessed for the benefit of all students. Achieving inclusive excellence across all aspects of student engagement will generate globally prepared, informed and respectful graduates who will excel in a global economy.

In addition, staff should have a sound understanding of the diversity that exists across the student population and a willingness to support individual student access requirements.

Institutional Alignment

A whole of university approach is central to a successful student experience. The experience needs to be 'owned' by all and integrated and well communicated across the university. It is vital that the perspectives and expertise from across the university contribute to the strategy's development and for all faculties and divisions to commit to the goals identified and priorities outlined. Strategies and initiatives outlined in the strategy should be embedded throughout the university, with the comprehensive suite of services and activities being embraced throughout the institution.

Measuring Success

This strategic framework requires the provision of timely and relevant data relating to the broad student experience and recognises the need for a coordinated approach to student feedback, reviews, benchmarking and evaluation. The capacity to segment and analyse results across and between diverse student cohorts will be critical in program development. Clearly identifiable and continuous measurements on the various aspects of the strategy are required, with the agility to respond to negative or positive measures.

Next Steps

Upon finalisation of the pillars and foundation themes, the strategy will be further developed with more significant consultation occurring. This will include the development of the following:

- Key strategies and activities under each pillar to achieve desired goals;
- Determination of key success indicators to determine progress towards the desired outcome; and
- Reference current literature and best practice examples from across Australia and overseas.

Student Experience Strategy

Experience UWA

Strategic Framework

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

