Student Retention and Success Strategy

2019–2021

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Spring Festival Semester 1, 2019

Overview

Our Student Retention and Success Strategy signals UQ's commitment to our diverse student population and outlines how we support each and every one of our students to feel connected and confident in their journey at UQ.

Universities have both an individual and societal responsibility to provide a student experience that gives every opportunity for students to succeed in their chosen area of study. While this in itself is widely accepted, rapid advances in technology and societal shifts in drivers and behaviours have disrupted some of the long-established approaches universities have adopted to meet that responsibility.

At the same time, students face an increasing range of pressures that can impact on their capacity to engage with student life. This, in turn, influences their motivations for commencing – and continuing to study. These factors should influence how universities understand and facilitate student retention. There is growing empirical knowledge in this sphere, yet the challenge remains that each student has an individual set of circumstances that belies a one-size fits all scaled-out approach to student retention.

The University of Queensland Student Retention and Success Strategy delivers enhancement across different aspects of the student experience, to bring a holistic and flexible approach that can be tailored to benefit each individual student.

Context and drivers

Today's students are seeking information, convenience, multiple options, valuable experiences, and global mobility. The Higher Education marketplace has become increasingly consumer-driven. Student retention features in the Government's performance monitoring, with the implementation of a National Standard for Improving Retention, Completion, and Success in Higher Education in June 2018. This suggests an increased focus on student retention from the Government, as Australia looks to continually grow its knowledge-based economy.

The Australian university student adjusted attrition rate is 14.97%, compared with England's 6.4%, and USA's 17.7% (2016 source: ABS (Aus.), HESA (UK), NSCCH (USA)). Within this context, The University of Queensland achieves an adjusted attrition rate of 8.71%.

Strategic alignment

The Student Retention and Success Strategy is aligned to the UQ Strategic Plan 2018–2021, as it calls for:

- Activities that attract, support, retain a diverse, inclusive community of high-achieving staff and students

- A transformed student experience underpinned by a flexible, integrated and partnered learning environment

- Game-changing graduates.

Great Court, St Lucia campus

Principles

- **Sense of belonging assists engagement**
- **Engagement assists retention**
- **Retention assists success**
- **Success can be defined in many ways**

Partnership – 'One UQ'

The student lens does not differentiate among areas of the university structure; a coordinated and collaborative approach to student retention will support the shared success of this strategy. The approach must include co-creating with students – a process of student engagement whereby students and staff collaborate to shape meaningful aspects of the student experience. This includes co-creation of curricular resources or students as consultants on course design teams (students as change agents).

Based on the principles of mutual respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility, students as partners is a mindset that should permeate the university community, building a culture of engaged students and staff.

Furthermore, students will be encouraged to take leadership roles within and beyond this partnership, facilitating self-generated responsibility, learning and leadership.

Whole of journey

While students may be most at risk of withdrawing from studies early in their program, adopting a holistic view of the student journey will ensure an integrated and valuable experience for them.

Future aspirations

Students tend to persist and succeed when they see the connection between studies and future lives. We will continue to develop opportunities that connect learning with future steps so that students can evolve as their aspirations do.

'Belonging' is a key idea in student retention, and is closely aligned with the concepts of academic and social engagement. Students' sense of being accepted, valued, included and encouraged by teachers, peers and staff is an important part of the student life. More than simple perceived liking, a sense of belonging also involves support and respect for the student as an individual. (Goodenow, 1993b, p. 25)

A better world embraces difference

The UQ community is enriched by diversity among our students and staff. When students learn in an environment that is cross-cultural and interdisciplinary, they are exposed to a wider range of perspectives. They can then build the capacity to understand and evaluate different opinions and ways of approaching problems. This is an enabler for social good.

Students are individuals

Each student's experience is different and individual. We will seek to adopt a personalised approach in our student interactions, and rethink our curriculum structure to move towards flexible modes of instruction and assessment. In doing so, we will open up new opportunities so that our graduates can continue to learn at UQ as their careers and lives evolve. These opportunities will be supported by digital technologies – including micro-credentialing, that are globally accessible.

Focus areas

Students will see their experiences from their own points of view, which are likely to be many and varied. The Strategy's focus areas enhance aspects of the UQ experience that students are likely to have in common and aim to help improve their chances of success. Focus areas will carry varying levels of meaning for each student, will intertwine and cross over and are designed to reach across our student population.

Focus area 1: Student life

By improving ease of access to the student experience, assisting with financial pressure, increasing physical spaces for students, activating campus, enhancing support services, and encouraging an inclusive, supportive and friendly student community, UQ will improve students' sense of belonging and engagement.

Focus area 2: Health and wellbeing

By introducing mental health initiatives, and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our primary health care provision and support services, UQ will support students in continuing with their studies.

Focus area 3: Careers advice and employability

By embedding a framework to help students understand and enhance their employability throughout their studies and working life, increasing access to careers and course advice earlier in the student journey, and simplifying program architecture, UQ will connect the student experience with opportunities that align to their career aspirations. Taking a holistic approach to experiential learning across curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular spaces, UQ will increase access for all students to work integrated learning, global experiences, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Focus area 4: Teaching and learning

By supporting teaching excellence and student-centred flexibility in an integrated learning environment, UQ will offer students personalised learning experiences with authentic assessments, and use educational technologies in contemporary learning spaces to create meaningful relationships between students, staff and communities.

Focus area 5: Partnering with students

By disrupting assumptions about the role of students, UQ students will become active participants in their own learning as partners, as co-researchers, and as curriculum co-creators; thereby improving sense of belonging, engagement, retention and success.

Focus area 6: Early recognition system

By implementing a learning data analytics and operational response system, UQ will be able to identify and provide support to those who may be at risk of struggling and unable to reach out for the help and support they require in a timely manner.

Welcome BBQ Semester 2, 2019

Focus area 1: **Student life**

STRATEGY		ACTION		ENABLER	TIMEFRAME	MEASURES
1.1	Enhance our digital interaction platform and move to smart, online, student administration	1.1.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 1.1 • A digitised, automated experience • A single online portal • 24/7 mobile virtual assistant			
1.2	Improve transport to and from campus	1.2.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 1.2 • Better public transport • Campus connection with Gatton town			
1.3	Freshen our on-campus retail	1.3.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 1.3 • Better food options and convenience • Wider price points			
1.4	Expand home / commuter facilities on campus	1.4.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 1.4 • Student spaces with home facilities and recreation places			
1.5	Ensure inclusivity	1.5.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 1.5 • Reviewed policies	UQ Student Life Plan	2018–2021	Instance of initiatives successfully implemented
1.6	Seek for the UQ student experience to be affordable	1.6.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 1.6 • Help for financial pressure • Part-time employment • Lower student prices			
1.7	Help students with accommodation	1.7.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 1.7 • Facilitated access to safe, well managed housing			
1.8	Enhance student mentoring	1.8.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 4.3 • Widened offering • Assured quality • Online access			
1.9	Nurture a strong sense of belonging at UQ	1.9.1	Student Life Plan Strategy 2.1, 2.2 • A fostered positive, supporting community • Dynamic, activated campuses • Opportunities to make lifelong friends			

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Focus area 2: **Health and wellbeing**

STRATEGY		ACTION		ENABLER	TIMEFRAME	MEASURES
2.1	Deliver mental health initiatives	**2.1.1**	Devise a UQ Mental Health Strategy and implement supporting student facing initiatives	UQ Mental Health Strategy	2018–2021	Instance of initiatives successfully implemented
2.2	Improve primary health care provision	**2.2.1**	Increase service levels and sustainability of provision	UQ Health Care	2018–2021	Appointment availability and financial cost for students
2.3	Optimise safety within the student community	**2.3.1**	Provide 24/7 on-campus security, safety response, and counselling services	UQ Student Life Plan	2018–2021	Instance of initiatives successfully implemented
		2.3.2	Engender a culture of respect, ethical by-standing, support and reporting concerns (including for sexual misconduct)	UQ Student Life Plan	2018–2021	Instance of initiatives successfully implemented

Focus area 3: **Careers advice and employability**

STRATEGY		ACTION		ENABLER	TIMEFRAME	MEASURES
3.1	Embed a student employability framework	**3.1.1**	Adopt framework with opportunities and services within and outside curriculum	UQ Student Employability Strategy	2018	Service provision and engagement levels
3.2	Increase access to careers and course advice earlier in the student journey	**3.2.1**	Include UQ professional careers advisers in prospective student events and recruitment initiatives	Internal collaboration	2019–2020	Advisers at events
		3.2.2	Introduce a collaborative, embedded careers and employability service model across UQ	UQ Student Strategy	2019	Service use and satisfaction rates
		3.2.3	Enhance our provision of course and program advice, assisting students to align studies with their career and personal aspirations	UQ Student Strategy	2019–2020	Service use and satisfaction rates
3.3	Increase access to student employability experiences	**3.3.1**	Work in partnership with industry to increase the number of work integrated learning (curricular) and work experience (extra-curricular) opportunities	UQ Student Strategy	2019–2021	Percentage of coursework students enrolled in a work integrated learning course within the year
		3.3.2	Increase the number and range of global opportunities available for students, including provision of funding to support access	UQ Student Strategy	2019–2021	Percentage of completing bachelor's students having an international exchange or short-term mobility experience (excluding one year honours)
		3.3.3	Increase access to entrepreneurial education (curricular) and entrepreneurship opportunities (extra-curricular) for students	UQ Student Strategy UQ Employability Strategy UQ Entrepreneurship Strategy	2019 - 2021	Enrolments in courses containing entrepreneurial education Number of student participants in UQ-facilitated entrepreneurial (extra-curricular) activities

Focus area 4: **Teaching and learning**

STRATEGY		ACTION		ENABLER	TIMEFRAME	MEASURES
4.1	Extend Peer-assisted Study Sessions (PASS) across schools / disciplines beyond first year	4.1.1	Scale up PASS activities to be inclusive of a more diverse cohort of students	Student Services Faculties / Schools	2019–2021	Number of students engaged in PASS activities
4.2	Expand English as an Additional Language (EAL) support	4.2.1	Support academic staff in embedding discipline-specific academic literacies within core curricula	Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation (ITaLI) Institute for Continuing and TESOL Education (ICTE) Student Services Faculties / Schools	2019–2020	Reduction in EAL academic misconduct Number of students accessing tutorials and online modules
		4.2.2	Expand discipline-specific English for Academic Communication (EAC) courses through small group tutorials and online modules	ITaLI ICTE Student Services Faculties / Schools	2019–2020	Instance of EAL academic misconduct Number of students accessing tutorials and online modules
		4.2.3	Offer in-semester English for general communication through small group tutorials	ITaLI ICTE Student Services Faculties / Schools	2019–2020	Instance of EAL academic misconduct Number of students accessing tutorials and online modules
4.3	Provide blended learning experiences	4.3.1	Introduce blended learning through UQ2U courses to maximise students' campus-based contact with academics and peers	Faculties / Schools ITaLI	2019	Number of UQ2U courses Student engagement and satisfaction rates
4.4	Expand authentic assessment opportunities	4.4.1	Ensure assessment is fair, reasonable and authentic with the provision of timely feedback	Academic Services Division (ASD) ITaLI Faculties	2019	Increase in student satisfaction relating to assessment
4.5	Nurture a university-wide culture that celebrates academic integrity	4.5.1	Develop an online academic integrity program to educate students on the importance of upholding academic integrity	ITaLI	2019	Launch online modules Number of students completing program
		4.5.2	Review processes and policies across the university to promote assessment design and learning opportunities that champion academic integrity	ITaLI ASD Faculties	2019–2021	Number of processes and policies reviewed and updated
4.6	Nurture a culture that values evidence-informed teaching practices to engage students in the transformative learning opportunities	4.6.1	Implement the UQ Professional Learning Roadmap	ITaLI	2019–2021	Increase in student satisfaction with teaching and learning
		4.6.2	Maintain teaching award applications and growth of Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowships	ITaLI	2019–2021	Growth in HEA fellows Maintenance of teaching award profile
		4.6.3	Review the impact of UQ strategic teaching and learning grants, fellowship programs and teaching awards	ITaLI	2019–2021	Increase in teaching quality and student academic outcomes
4.7	Deliver a streamlined, sustainable and inclusive portfolio of programs and courses	4.7.1	Simplify and standardise academic program architecture rules, policies and administration	ASD ITaLI	2019–2021	Initiatives of Program Architecture 2 Team implemented

Global Change Institute, St Lucia campus

Focus area 5: **Partnering with students**

STRATEGY		ACTION		ENABLER	TIMEFRAME	MEASURES
5.1	Seek input and feedback from students	**5.1.1**	Improve student representation and partnership levels across the University committee structure	Student-Staff Partnership program	2018–2020	Number (and percentage of) students on committees / steering groups
5.2	Co-create with students	**5.2.1**	Assist The University of Queensland Union (UQU) in representing the student voice on behalf of the UQ student population	UQ-UQU Agreement	2019	Student satisfaction levels with UQU representation
		5.2.2	Provide opportunities for students to collaborate with staff on curricular and non-curricular projects, including leadership roles within and beyond this partnership	Student-Staff Partnership program	2018–2021	Number of projects completed

Focus area 6: **Early recognition system**

STRATEGY		ACTION		ENABLER	TIMEFRAME	MEASURES
6.1	Implement an early recognition system	**6.1.1**	Investigate a teacher dashboard that provides teaching staff with dynamic student enrolments, engagement and assessment information	UQ Learning Analytics	2019	Pilot completed – if successful, software in use Teaching staff identify and offer early support to students who are at-risk
		6.1.2	Investigate a student-facing dashboard which provides students with dynamic information about their academic engagement and ongoing assessment outcomes	UQ Learning Analytics	2019	Pilot completed – if successful, percentage of students accessing the dashboard
		6.1.3	Investigate a supportive system that uses learning data to identify students who are at risk of attrition	ITaLI Student Services	2019–2020	Pilot completed – if successful, system is embedded Number of interventions Attrition rates of high risk students
		6.1.4	Use learning data to inform course review and design	UQ Engagement Analytics	2019–2020	Learning data is evidenced in course design

Glossary of terms

Blended learning

Combinations of face-to-face interactions with online activities. The balance between face-to-face elements and digitally enabled activities varies depending on the purpose and outcomes to be achieved. There are clear links between in-class and out-of-class activities and a clear purpose for the use of digital content. Digital tools used in or out of class can enhance students' ability to create, share and discuss content, and provide increased opportunities to learn from multiple perspectives.

Course

A discrete portion of a program with a distinct name, code and unit value.

Employability

Employability is a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to attain lifelong employment success, have impact in organisations, create enterprising opportunities for themselves and others, and effect positive change throughout all stages of their careers to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

Student experience

Everything that takes place to enhance the lives of people studying at the University. This includes academic progression of a student as well as interactions, engagements and touch points that students have as members of the wider UQ community, both within and beyond the 'assessed' curriculum. The UQ student experience embraces both the academic (e.g. learning, teaching and research experience) and the non-academic (e.g. personal and extra-curricular) aspects of being a UQ student as an integral part of the UQ community.

Student retention

Student retention broadly refers to students who remain in Higher Education, and who complete their program of study. There are many definitions of retention and attrition within the sector. Many of these focus on progression from first-year to second-year of study; that is, the stage often representing the highest risk of student attrition or non-continuation.

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