

THE VU AGENDA AND BLUEPRINT FOR CURRICULUM REFORM

CAPABILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

November 2012



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“Victoria University’s students are both younger and older, and more educationally, culturally, linguistically and economically diverse than is the case for other universities in Australia.”



PART 1: PREAMBLE

1.1 THE STRATEGIC PLAN

1.1.1 Four Areas of Reform

Under *The VU Agenda* four key reform areas have emerged as major priorities:

- Curriculum Reform (led by the Curriculum Commission)
- Organisational Reform
- Workforce Reform and Organisational Development
- Campus and Infrastructure Reform.

The implementation of these reform areas will see unprecedented change at Victoria University, both structurally and culturally and as a consequence it is important that we do it right. From the outset the University has committed strongly to consulting with staff and other stakeholders but this has also had to be carefully balanced with implementing some changes with a certain degree of urgency (e.g. the new College structure). Structures and processes, underpinned by a robust change management methodology, have been put in place to support this reform and to ensure that we deliver these changes successfully.

1.1.2 Our Mission

The Victoria University Strategic Plan for 2012–2016: *Excellent, Engaged and Accessible* has established an important, necessary and challenging educational mission for this diverse student population over the next five years.

Through its distinctive approach to curriculum, the student experience, research and knowledge exchange, emphasising engagement with industry and community, Victoria University will be renowned for:

- empowering students from diverse countries and cultures, socio-economic and educational backgrounds, to be successful lifelong learners, grow their skills and capabilities for the changing world of work, and be confident, creative, ethical and respectful, local and global citizens.
- finding creative and evidence-based solutions to important contemporary challenges in Australia, Asia and globally, relating especially to education and lifelong learning, to health and active living, to the cultural diversity and well-being of communities, to economic development and environmental sustainability, and to the success of particular industries and places, especially our heartland of the West of Melbourne, Australia's fastest growing region.¹

¹ *Excellent, Engaged and Accessible. Victoria University's Strategic Plan to be a great university of the 21st century, 2012 – 2016.* November 2011.
<https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/wfg/pdfs/vu-strategic-plan.pdf>

The Strategic Plan acknowledges the importance of the whole student experience in enabling students to achieve their goals. Therefore the Plan uses the term curriculum as the organising idea for education, encompassing **why** learning is occurring, **what** will be learned, **where** and **when** learning occurs², **how** learning takes place, how learning is **assessed**, how we **prepare teaching staff** to support learning and how we, as a university, **interact with students** more generally including how we inform, counsel and communicate with them. This Curriculum Blueprint focuses on the designed learning experience; the why, what, where, when and how of learning.

1.1.3 Victoria University's Students

Victoria University's students are both younger and older, and more educationally, culturally, linguistically and economically diverse than is the case for other universities in Australia. They include early school leavers enrolled in Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning and pre-apprenticeship programs, apprentices, TAFE diploma students as well as higher education undergraduate and postgraduate students undertaking course work and research based qualifications. The University's students come from the west of Melbourne, other parts of Melbourne and from other countries. They learn on campus, in workplaces (20%) and at offshore partner sites (16%). They include those preparing to enter the workforce as well as new entrants to work and experienced people seeking education to support their career development aspirations. Many Victoria University students are first in family to participate in tertiary education and, as with other universities; many Victoria University students require support to succeed.³

Achievement of the University's ambitions for this diverse student population is a complex task. First, we must work hard to attain the excellence to which we aspire. To claim to be excellent we have chosen, rightly, to define excellence as achievement within the top quartile for the measures based on national surveys:

- the *Graduate Destination Survey*, including the *Course Experience Questionnaire*, for higher education
- *Student Outcomes Survey* for vocational and further education.

Our challenges do not end with planning for excellence. We must achieve this goal in a rapidly changing tertiary education sector; one in which new types of tertiary institutions and new ways of learning

² UK Higher Education Academy, *Imaginative Curriculum Project* (2007).

³ A VU study conducted in 2011 and 2012 used the Australian Core Skills Framework (DEEVR, 2011) to assess the commencing writing levels of 2,552 students from all faculties. 15% were found to be at ASCF Level 1 and 2, indicating limited vocabulary, grammatical accuracy and understanding of conventions as well as a restricted capacity to move beyond familiar and predictable contexts without support and/or modelling.

are emerging. Think Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCS)⁴, global universities, global rankings, cloud based learning, and the explosion of private provision, to name a few.

Institutional competitiveness and sustainability for a university increasingly depends on the attractiveness and accessibility of its courses. Our learning and teaching must not only be excellent but must represent the unique aspirations of our Strategic Plan to make our University distinctive and attractive in the external environment. To achieve this, the University's high level goals for learning and teaching build on its historical achievements and character to seek recognition as:

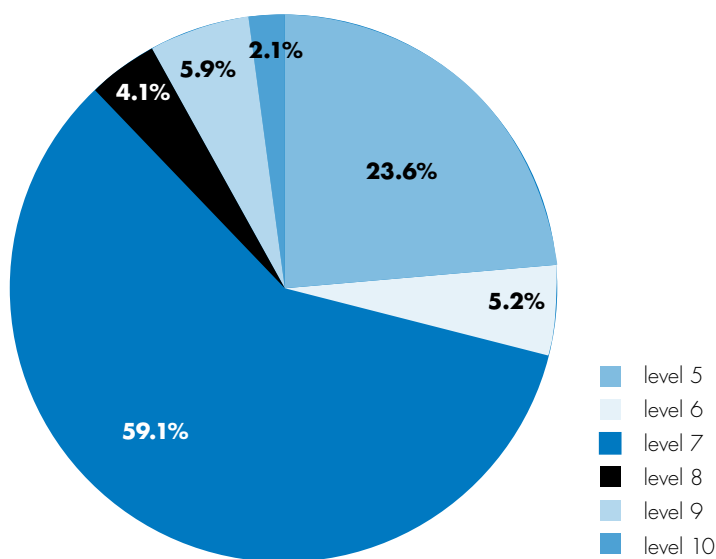
- a A leading university by world standards in learning and teaching and the student experience of tertiary students from diverse countries, cultures, socio-economic and educational backgrounds.
- b A leading provider in Victoria of the pre-tertiary education for students from diverse backgrounds, especially in the West of Melbourne.
- c Internationally renowned for its distinctive curriculum and approach to learning and teaching, emphasising work-integrated learning, community-integrated learning, learning-integrated work, problem solving and cross cultural skills.⁵

For our final challenge we must consider how our student population will change over the next 5–10 years and how much we can, and may wish to, shape that change. **Figure 1** below shows the University's 2011 tertiary load by Australian Qualifications Framework level (AQF levels 5–10). Analysis of our tertiary load mix reveals a number of opportunities for reshaping including:

- A tertiary environment with policy and funding settings focused on increasing participation in Bachelor Degrees, Victoria University has an exceptional opportunity to transition Diploma/Advanced Diploma students into higher education students.

- Victoria University enrolls fewer postgraduate students, as a proportion of overall load, than other universities. The University has an opportunity to increase load from the University's access to many workplaces through its 'learning in the workplace and community' and workplace based vocational education programs.
- The new College structure and emerging work by the Distinctive Specialisations teams should create the modular, vertically integrated qualifications, allowing multiple entry and exit points, that mature aged students prefer and that are increasingly needed as our workforce ages.⁶

Figure 1: Percentage of Tertiary Load (EFTSL) by Australian Qualifications Framework Level⁷



⁴ Massive, open, online courses now available from some of the world's most prestigious universities www.eurweb.com/2012/05/harvard-and-mit-offer-free-online-courses-fall-2012/

⁵ *Excellent, Engaged and Accessible. Victoria University's Strategic Plan to be a great university of the 21st century, 2012 – 2012.* November 2011. <https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/wfg/pdfs/vu-strategic-plan.pdf>

⁶ Brown, P., & Hesketh, A. (2004). *The mismanagement of talent: employability and jobs in the knowledge economy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁷ Data analysis by Sharon Brown and Cameron Stein, Quality, Information & Planning. Planning & Finance, Victoria University

1.1.4 The Curriculum Commission

It is in the context of these challenges and opportunities that the Vice-Chancellor commissioned the Curriculum Commission⁸ to work with the University community to translate the vision of the Strategic Plan into a practical framework for the renewal of the University's tertiary qualifications, a framework for learning that develops the capabilities needed by 21st Century citizens and the skills required for current and future work and career development.

The work of the Curriculum Commission spanned a year and each element of the Curriculum Framework has been developed through an extensive consultation process including⁹:

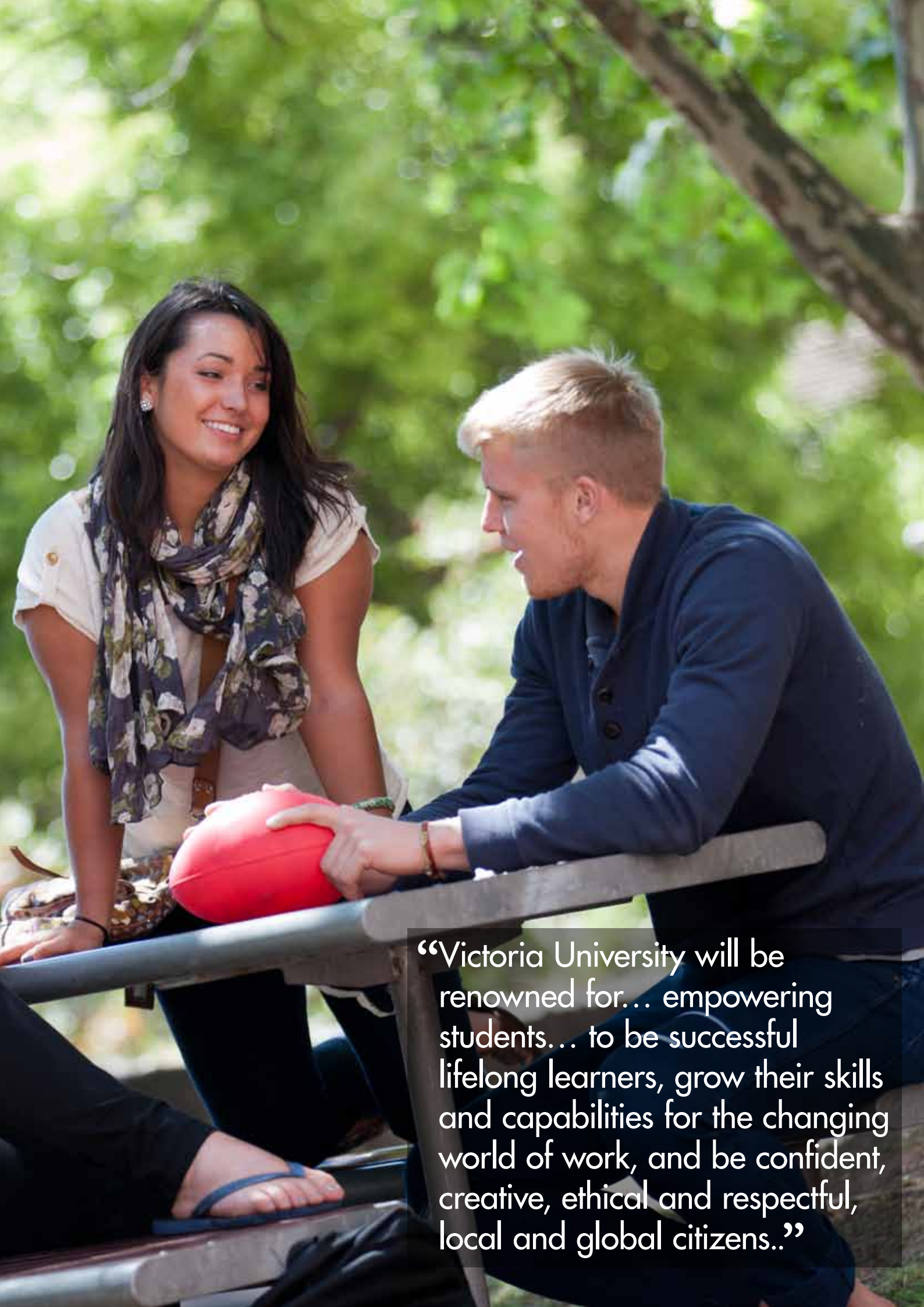
- Development and dissemination of think pieces, discussion papers and draft strategy documents.
- Online communication through the Curriculum Commission website which has been accessed by more than 500 individual staff members.
- Staff and student feedback provided via blogs, emails and otherwise documented individual or group feedback.
- Discussions with organisational units including all schools and five offshore partner sites.
- Public forums and workshops on particular topics.
- Reports to, and discussion with, the Education Research Board (ERB), the ERB Strategy and Teaching and Learning committees, Council.

The following chapters outline the key recommendations of the Curriculum Commission which form the guidelines for the development of the University's Tertiary Curriculum.

⁸ The Curriculum Commission consists of the following members:

- Professor Anne Jones, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Students) (Chair), Victoria University
- Professor Greg Baxter, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Students), Victoria University
- Professor Margaret Mazzolini, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), Victoria University
- Ms Susan Young, Executive Dean, Victoria University College, Victoria University
- Professor Marie Brennan, School of Education, Victoria University
- Professor David Lamond, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Offshore Development, Victoria University
- Professor Richard Teese, Professor of Post-compulsory Education and Training and Director of Research on Education Systems, University of Melbourne, Victoria University
- Professor Roger Slee, Director Institute for Diversity, Educational Access and Success, Victoria University

⁹ The VU Tertiary Curriculum Framework: Report on Consultation provides a comprehensive report on the consultation and the feedback received is available for download from the Curriculum Commission website, <https://kit.vu.edu.au/engagement/CurriculumCommission/default.aspx>.



“Victoria University will be renowned for... empowering students... to be successful lifelong learners, grow their skills and capabilities for the changing world of work, and be confident, creative, ethical and respectful, local and global citizens..”

PART 2: TERTIARY CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

2.1 DEFINING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

We know that every point of contact between the University and the student potentially affects the student's learning. Some analysts claim that up to 40% of the student experience measured in national surveys takes place outside the classroom and has a significant impact on transition, retention and successful completion. For this reason the Curriculum Commission intends that the overall student experience will reflect the Victoria University Tertiary Curriculum Framework and works synergistically with the formal learning environment to support learning. Contact between the student and the University includes a host of transactional contacts such as enrolment, buying food and obtaining concession cards. It also includes potentially transformational experiences such as student leadership opportunities, sports and clubs¹⁰. While the Tertiary Curriculum Framework focuses on the designed and formal learning environment, a further piece of work is underway to develop a complimentary framework for the broader student experience. Our ambitious goal is to see the designed learning experience and the broader transactional and transformative student experience focus on the University's identified graduate capabilities.

2.2 RECOMMENDED GRADUATE CAPABILITIES

Victoria University recognises the importance of learning within and beyond disciplines; of building capabilities that each individual will use to navigate their own uncertain future and to contribute to solving the wicked problems that characterise globalised 21st Century societies. The Strategic Plan aligns our aspirations for the University's graduates with two sets of thinking about graduate capabilities: a set of skills commonly referred to as skills for 21st Century workplaces¹¹ and those known as global citizenship capabilities.¹²

*Victoria University will be renowned for...empowering students...to be successful lifelong learners, grow their skills and capabilities for the changing world of work, and be confident, creative, ethical and respectful, local and global citizens.*¹³

This choice reinforces both the social and vocational purposes of education¹⁴ and builds on the richness of the University's student population with its diversity of cultural, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. In addition the Plan particularly emphasises the importance of complex problem solving and inter-cultural understanding capabilities as well as the workplace as a context for learning.

These graduate capabilities express the mission and objectives of the Strategic Plan and convey the sense of agency and empowerment that we wish for in our graduates. In proposing a new graduate capability statement we acknowledge that:

- The AQF specifies skills, knowledge and their application in qualifications whereas these capabilities, as is increasingly common in university capability statements, do represent values and dispositions as much as skills and knowledge.¹⁵
- Nationally, discipline groups are developing discipline based approaches to graduate capabilities, however Victoria University is committed to learning that transcends and unites disciplines.
- In regard to developing discipline-based capstones, consideration of opportunities for developing substantial group projects such as community or industry sponsored large-scale research projects that can be used to provide professional learning opportunities for large numbers of students.

¹¹ Wagner, T. (2008). *The Global Achievement Gap*. New York: Basic

¹² See extract from the Strategic Plan on page 5.

¹³ See extract from the Strategic Plan on page 5.

¹⁴ For more information about these capabilities please refer to the discussion paper Capabilities for the 21st Century on the Curriculum Commission website. <https://kit.vu.edu.au/engagement/CurriculumCommission/default.aspx>

¹⁵ Hager, P., & Holland, S. (2007). *Graduate Attributes, Learning and Employability*. Dordrecht: Springer

¹⁰ MacDonald, Colin. *A Conceptualisation of the Student Experience*. June 2012. Curriculum Commission website

- The application of these capability statements at every AQF level will rely on high level capability statements that can be applied to all students with some underpinning explanatory statements that can be adapted for each group.
- For some capabilities, that are traditionally difficult to measure, we need to learn from universities that have successfully measured the development of such capabilities into their curricula.¹⁶

The specification of values and dispositions, in addition to knowledge skills, provides a richer, more potent approach, one that better articulates the distinctive capabilities and the agency needed to navigate the unknown complexities of 21st Century life. We have expressed them in broad terms to encourage flexible and specialisation-specific development, and allow them to link appropriately with the requirements of multiple professional and occupational accreditation bodies. We also anticipate that postgraduate and research degree students ought to be able to further develop their capabilities in the three main capabilities expressed below.

2.2.1 Capability Statements

Victoria University will support graduates to develop the capabilities needed for them to be:

1. **Adaptable and capable 21st century citizens**, who can *communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically and solve complex problems.*

Underpinning concepts here include:

- Identifying, anticipating and solving problems ranging from simple to important, complex and unpredictable problems.

- Accessing, evaluating and analysing information.
 - Effective communication using known and yet to be developed tools in many contexts.
 - Using effective interpersonal skills, collaborate with, and influence, their personal, work and community networks locally and globally.
2. **Confident, creative lifelong learners** who can use their *understanding of themselves and others to achieve their goals in work and learning.*

Underpinning concepts here include:

- Understanding of the role of culture, values and dispositions in affecting achievement of goals.
 - Understanding how to initiate and develop new ideas.
 - Planning and organising self and others.
 - Decision making.
3. **Responsible and ethical citizens** who use their *inter-cultural understanding to contribute to their local and global communities.*

Underpinning concepts here include:

- Respecting and valuing diversity.
- Developing capacities required to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable world, including courage and resilience.
- Understanding the workings of local and global communities and individual's responsibilities within these.
- Understanding the intricacies of balancing individual and public good.

¹⁶ One such example is Portland State University in the United States which has implemented such an approach through its University Studies program <http://pdx.edu/unst/>

2.3 RECOMMENDED TERTIARY CURRICULUM PRINCIPLES

The graduate capabilities statements as much define ways of working for our staff and students within the University as for our graduates outside it. Therefore it is important to stress the interconnectedness of the various reform areas of *The Blueprint*¹⁷. The Tertiary Curriculum Principles cannot be applied without the cultural shift represented by the formation of the Colleges to build the integrated, collaborative, inclusive, and team-based approaches to curriculum reform specified below. The Tertiary Curriculum Framework will be the overarching framework for learning and teaching and will underpin improvements in the quality and distinctiveness of the student experience at Victoria University.

Three complementary sub-strategies¹⁸ have been developed and are included in this paper:

- The Victoria University Pre-Tertiary Curriculum
- Blended and e-learning delivery strategy
- Social inclusion.

Note that the previously proposed Integrated Education Program strategy has been subsumed into the Tertiary Curriculum Framework and the detailed Teaching Capability and Broader Student Experience strategies will follow early in 2013.

Victoria University's Curriculum Framework will achieve the goals of the University's Strategic Plan 2012–2016: *Excellent, Engaged and Accessible* by:

1. *Empowering students from diverse countries and cultures, socio-economic and educational backgrounds through a distinctive, excellent and supported learning experience through the development of **graduate capabilities**, developing creative, ethical and respectful **global citizens** and providing student learning support through a **transitions pedagogy** approach.*
2. *Providing professionally-oriented tertiary qualification structures and study options to support the needs of diverse cohorts of students through **modular and integrated qualifications suites** with inbuilt pathways, development of **discipline expertise, practice-integrated learning, research and enquiry skills, interprofessional practice** and **blended** learning and assessment portfolios.*
3. *Supporting our learning community to achieve world standards in learning and teaching through establishing **collaborative communities** of internal and external partners to drive learning and assessment design and teaching; encouraging a **scholarly approach to tertiary teaching and adding value** to the student experience through evidence-based practice.*

¹⁷ *The VU Agenda and Blueprint for Organisational Reform*, <https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/wfg/pdfs/VUAgendaSept2012.pdf>

¹⁸ NB of the original 8 sub-strategies specified in the Strategic Plan, the Tertiary Curriculum Framework is one and the original Integrated Education Sub-Strategy is now subsumed into the Tertiary Curriculum Framework

2.4 VICTORIA UNIVERSITY TERTIARY CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

This section outlines the main practical changes implicit in these Principles and will form the basis of future policies, procedures, and practices.

The changes will be implemented through a systematic 3–5 year plan during which Colleges will review all of their qualifications and consider innovative options for future development.

2.4.1 Guidelines for the Scope, Design and Content of Qualifications

The University:

1. *Develops and manages each tertiary qualification as part of a suite of integrated, higher level VET, undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications rather than as single qualifications.*

This is consistent with the Distinctive Specialisations approach and will facilitate a logical, coherent, evidence based approach to the development of our qualifications range relying on linkages designed into vertically integrated sets of VET/undergraduate and postgraduate rather than retrofitted pathways.

2. *Applies a consistent approach to **major and minor streams** of study to facilitate the development of double degrees, cross-University study and other flexible options for different students and qualifications.*

This approach should provide increased choice whilst reducing the number of units.

3. *Builds **multiple entry and exit points** into each destination qualification.*

Diploma and Associate Degree entry and exit points will be built into Bachelor Degrees and Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma entry and exit points into Masters Degrees. The consistent creation of multiple entry and exit points within qualifications will ensure a modular approach giving students the flexibility that less well prepared as well as experienced learners need.

4. *Provides **guaranteed places for further study** in each qualification suite into appropriate courses at the time of the initial enrolment contingent on progress.*

This is intended to increase overall enrolments and encourage transitions from Diploma to Degree and undergraduate to postgraduate study.

5. *Uses **transitions pedagogy** in qualifications design and delivery to support students at identified transition hot spots.*

Transitions pedagogy in the Victoria University context refers to intentional curriculum design and delivery that carefully scaffolds and mediates support for learning transitions across all AQF levels and is particularly relevant to less experienced students commencing at all qualifications levels.

Successful approaches to transition include peer to peer learning support, embedded literacy and numeracy development, co-curricula academic skills development, and structured formative assessment and feedback processes. Transitions pedagogy at particular transition hot spots such as the first year of the proposed Career Start Bachelor Degrees (see below) may rely on smaller classes and more contact hours.

6. *Will develop two categories of undergraduate degrees in the future: a small set of **Career Start Bachelor Degrees** and a larger number of **Professional Bachelor Degrees**.^{19 20}*

Career Start Bachelor Degrees will increase participation in higher education and will be designed for students who are less well prepared for conventional higher education. Transitions pedagogy resources will be prioritised to support these students and we envisage providing an intensively taught first year that benefits from the combined expertise of our TAFE and higher education workforces. We recognise that for some disciplines, students in Career Start Bachelor Degrees may need two years to develop the academic skills and the disciplinary foundations needed to complete a degree. For this reason we expect that some Career Start Bachelor Degrees may consist of a two year Associate Degree program leading to a third, or third and fourth, Bachelor Degree year. Subject to performance, students may transfer from Career Start Bachelor Degrees into Professional Bachelor Degrees or choose to complete their Career Start Degree.

The restricted access professional degrees are intended to be a development of many of the University's existing degrees. The Distinctive Specialisations project provides the opportunity to rethink the value and positioning of the University's degrees and to ensure that these are indeed distinctive and meeting student, industry and community needs. The University's existing general Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science will continue.

¹⁹ We acknowledge that this nomenclature is not yet clear enough for widespread use.

²⁰ The university will also offer a small number of Professional Masters Degrees.

7. Explicitly addresses **capabilities** in the design of all undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications.

This can be achieved in a number of ways including:

- Selecting complex, important, resistant problems – wicked problems – as themes to frame the development of capabilities, particularly through sets of interdisciplinary units culminating in capability capstones, providing opportunities for students to develop capabilities such as problem solving and inter-cultural understanding of significant global issues such as global warming, indigenous disadvantage and adapting to the Asian century.
- Embedding, assessing and providing feedback on the development of capabilities within disciplinary learning as much as possible – for example, problem solving skills could be developed in a disciplinary context and then further developed progressively through a range of curriculum check points including practice-integrated learning and the third year capstone projects described below.
- The development of interdisciplinary elective streams (for example 4 units in an undergraduate degree suite) culminating in capstones which will provide a final opportunity for students to consolidate their development of capabilities such as problem solving and inter-cultural understanding.
- A new approach to practice-integrated learning (the learning variously known as Learning in the Workplace and Community (LiWC), Learning-integrated Work (LiW), Community-integrated Learning (CiL) and Work-integrated Learning (WiL) that focuses on alignment with capabilities development rather than on formal links to 25% of assessment.
- Development of capabilities within a new Student Life Strategy.
- Note that the inclusion of inter disciplinary approaches to capabilities development will be easier if the University adopts strategies such as consistent and more flexible degree structures that allow mid-year entry into courses, and the introduction of summer and/or winter terms.

8. Will ensure that **all postgraduate qualifications are scholarly, professionally aligned and AQF compliant by 2015.**

With respect to course work based postgraduate qualifications this will include:

- Consideration of which professional qualifications ought to shift to postgraduate level.
- Development of nested Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma structures for all Masters Degrees.

- Implementation of a logical, coherent, flexible, whole-of-University approach to the identification of the postgraduate course range and to the design of individual qualifications.
- Inclusion of a range of professional practice flexible options that meet the needs of domestic and international, full time and part time students in all postgraduate course work qualifications.
- Development of a consistent approach to research skills development within all postgraduate qualifications suites and possibly including Masters level capstone units.
- Consideration of opportunities for developing substantial group projects such as community or industry sponsored large-scale research projects that can be used to provide professional learning opportunities for large numbers of students.
- Development of coherent and harmonised design principles for all postgraduate course work qualifications to optimise flexibility and choice for students.
- Development of continuing professional education programs for industry, community and professions based on modularised units from Victoria University postgraduate course work degrees that can be offered with optional assessment and, in the latter case, accumulated towards postgraduate awards.
- Implementation of high quality workplace based pedagogies for postgraduate qualifications.
- Development of packaged undergraduate and postgraduate enrolment offers, dependent on progress, for prospective students.

9. Will develop a comprehensive program to **attract and retain high performing students**

Currently only 3% of commencing Victoria University Bachelor Degree students have ATAR scores over 80 and recently available MyUniversity data show that a significant number of successful Victoria University students choose to transfer to other universities.

We recommend the design and implementation of a comprehensive program, within each of the Professional Bachelor Degrees, aimed at attracting high performing students by offering them a range of unique experiences including prestigious industry or research placements and innovatory interdisciplinary opportunities. Students may be invited into this program on the basis of their academic performance before or during their enrolment at Victoria University.

2.5 GUIDELINES FOR HOW, WHEN AND WHERE WE TEACH

Victoria University will prioritise improvement in the quality of the learning experience as perceived by students. Our approach will be evidence based and consistent, producing measurable and comparable outcomes. Strategies will be developed within and across teaching teams in the new College structure and will include:

- Transitions pedagogy approaches.
- A purposeful approach to blending face-to-face, online and workplace delivery to match the intended learning outcomes and provide flexibility for students.
- Revised approaches to timetabling support for students undertaking common elective streams, by use of blended delivery and/or intensive winter/summer delivery, as appropriate.
- Course and unit delivery, assessment and professional development priorities developed by collaborative teaching teams, including sessional teachers and academic skills development, curriculum and blended learning support staff.
- Inclusion of offshore and Sydney campus staff as team members providing input into planning course and unit delivery and assessment.
- The development of a consistently high standard for learning resources provided to students.
- Resources and pedagogies developed to support delivery using flexible, technology-rich learning spaces in outer urban locations and, eventually, other community or workplace based settings.²¹

2.6 GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND SUPPORT OF TEACHING STAFF

The University will:

- Require new staff (both higher education and vocational education) to participate in an ongoing program of improvement in teaching quality including participation in the Graduate Certificate of Tertiary Education, and annual commitment to activities that improve teaching quality such as scholarship of learning and teaching, formal evaluation, peer mentoring and validation, etc.
- Provide strong infrastructure support for scholarship of teaching to build a nexus between research and teaching.
- Introduce new awards for innovation and excellence in teaching recognising increased retention, movement across qualifications, improvement in literacies and numeracies, or enhanced research capabilities.
- Develop a revised promotions policy and other instruments to ensure that these support career pathways for scholarly and excellent teachers.

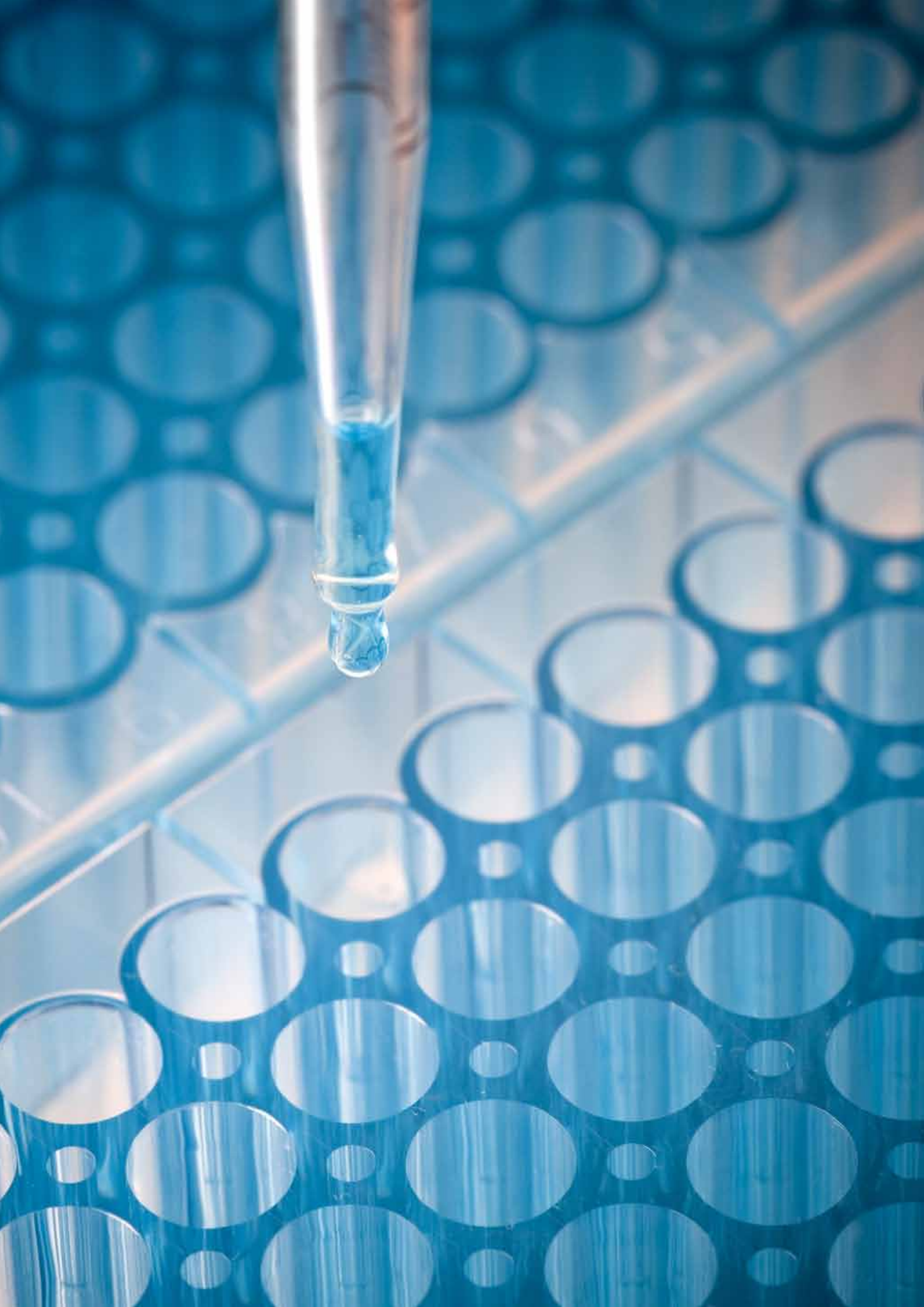
²¹ Note a 2012 pilot is developing an approach which combines local learning experiences with large group activities supported through video-conferencing

2.7 GUIDELINES FOR GOVERNANCE

The University will ensure that:

- Disciplinary teams in Colleges will develop academic programs supported by a single set of simplified, centrally organised and supported academic governance processes.
- The development of revised academic policies which focus on principles-based approaches to support flexibility while safeguarding standards.
- The development of modified procedures and systems as needed to align learning outcomes with discipline content, teaching activities, assessment tasks and the development of capabilities of the future, and which are central to:
 - course development, approval and review
 - our assurance of quality and standards, for delivery in multiple locations within Australia and offshore.
- High quality Victoria University standards be implemented for course development and delivery, including for online components and documentation to speed up approval processes and facilitate innovation moving to implementation.
- Courses and improvement initiatives will be reviewed according to a new, agreed learning and teaching quality framework that is focused on a small set of indicators related to key student learning and graduate outcomes.





PART 3: PRE-TERTIARY CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

3.1 CONTEXT

Victoria University's Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework is consistent with the overarching Tertiary Curriculum Framework and also foregrounds the particular needs of students studying at AQF levels I to III. Recent research suggests that some lower level vocational Training Package qualifications are not equipping students well for either employment or future study and that such qualifications should ensure that students develop lifelong learning skills and other broader capabilities alongside industry knowledge and skills.²²

The Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework will ensure that courses at AQF levels I to III meet the revised AQF requirement to prepare students for learning at higher AQF levels and provides the basis for a distinctive Pre-Tertiary Curriculum.

3.1.1 Development of the Framework

The development of the Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework drew on the work on youth retention work completed by the Victoria University Work-based Education Research Centre (WERC) in association with the Portfolio of Youth in VU College, as well as government and Victoria University reports relating to AQF level I to III courses. Following the development of a draft Framework, it was validated by 5 teaching teams currently delivering qualifications at AQF I to III.²³

3.2 THE PRE-TERTIARY FRAMEWORK

The Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework is designed to support the achievement of a unique suite of outcomes for students participating in Victoria University courses at AQF I to III, these include:

- language, literacy and numeracy skills – important foundations to learning
- 21st Century capabilities as well as up to date and relevant knowledge and industry skills
- strong connections to industry and community
- the confidence and ability to successfully negotiate multiple transitions from school to further study, from further study to work and work to further study and a commitment to lifelong learning.

To achieve this across the broad range of courses offered at this level, the Framework focuses on guidelines for the design, and teaching of these courses. These guidelines promote a whole of course approach to design and delivery which:

- embeds principles informed by the broader Curriculum Commission's endorsed approach to transitions
- foregrounds pedagogical approaches based on constructivist learning and in particular principles of applied learning
- supports the integration of content with the development of lifelong learning skills and capabilities.



Figure 2: The Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework

²² Stanwick, John (2006). *Australian Qualifications Framework lower-level qualifications: Outcomes for people over 25*. Adelaide, National Centre for Vocational Education Research
Stanwick, John (2006). *Outcomes from higher-level vocational education and training qualifications*. Adelaide, National Centre for Vocational Education Research
Wheelahan, Leesa (2009). What kind of access does VET provide to higher education for low SES students? Not a lot, Student equity in higher education: What we know. What we need to know, National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, University of South Australia, 25 & 26 February

²³ The teams were Certificate III in Children's Services (program involving significant workplace learning), Certificate III in Carpentry (an apprenticeship course), Certificate II in Plumbing (offered both onsite and as part of VETiS), VCE (a no-trade based course currently considered equivalent to AQF III), and VCAL (a senior secondary course offered with integrated trades programs at AQF level II)

Successful implementation of the Framework requires that it be applied consistently across all applicable courses and is supported by structured and staged professional development. The Framework aims to engender a culture in which the importance of Certificate I to III curriculum is recognised and in which the outcomes of these courses can be continually monitored for their impact on retention, pathways and employment outcomes for our students.

3.2.1 Course Design

Course design principles in the Pre-Tertiary Framework highlight the importance of a whole of course approach to the development of student knowledge and skills, strong connections to industry and community and the importance of embedded formative and summative assessment. These principles draw on Victoria University's overarching commitment to intentional curriculum design and delivery that carefully scaffolds and mediates support for learning transitions across all AQF levels, as articulated in Victoria University's proposed transitions pedagogy.

Teaching and learning outcomes in the Framework will be underpinned by the following course design principles, informed by the transitions pedagogy approach:

1. A whole of course approach to curriculum design (rather than a unit based approach) and a cross discipline team approach to delivery of all aspects of the course adopted.
2. Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) development and assessment is embedded in curriculum and there is ongoing integrated assessment of core skills (LLN) against the Australian Core Skills Framework.²⁴
3. Access to industry-current technology is provided and students are given the opportunity to meet potential employers and industry/community/alumni role models as part of their course.
4. Course design that:
 - Scaffolds learning to enable pathways to further study and students are informed about pathways to further study or employment as part of the course.
 - Integrates information and activities that foreground career development and facilitate early review of course choices to assist students in making informed decisions about their future.

- Assists students to review course selection and course expectations are made explicit to students, teachers, industry and community partners.
 - Creates structured and unstructured opportunities for students to get to know their class peers and orientation is used as a key to connecting students and a range of in curriculum activities create connections to people and place.
5. Assessments are designed to allow for negotiation with students/employers to achieve agreed outcomes and formalised feedback and evaluation processes provide students with regular feedback
 6. Self-directed and autonomous learning capacity of the student is explicitly developed and practiced during the course.
 7. Individual student's needs are identified and responded to and students have at least one point of contact for all of their questions.
 8. Participation is monitored and follow up action is taken including through referral to appropriate services.

3.2.2 Explicit Pedagogy

Pre-Tertiary teaching will be underpinned by a range of pedagogical approaches which foster the development of graduate capabilities; student centred and engaged learning and the integration of foundation skills development. Particular attention will be given to approaches which foreground applied learning and the needs of students negotiating multiple transitions across the learning journey.

The definition of applied learning which informs this Framework is grounded in a constructivist approach which acknowledges the importance of actively engaging learners throughout the learning process.

Applied learning is considered to be more than practical or 'hands on' learning. It includes both theory and application but the link between the two is provided by the context. Contextualizing learning empowers and motivates students and assists them to develop skills and knowledge that they will need for education, employment, training and involvement in the community.²⁵

Practices which support this approach to learning are underpinned by the following principles:²⁶

1. Start where the learners are at; include early assessment of foundation skills such as LLN.

²⁴ www.innovation.gov.au/Skills/LiteracyAndNumeracy/AustralianCoreSkillsFramework/Pages/Downloads.aspx

²⁵ Applied learning – learning choices information sheet downloaded 26/09/2012 from www.learningchoices.org.au/case_studies/vcal/applied_learning.php

²⁶ Based on the VCAL principles of Applied Learning available at www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vcal/VCALinfoapplearn.pdf

2. Engage in a dialogue with learners about their curriculum.
3. Share knowledge, recognise the knowledge learners bring to the learning environment.
4. Connect with communities and real life experiences.
5. Build resilience, confidence and self-worth – consider the whole person.
6. Integrate learning, learning should reflect the integration that occurs in real life tasks.
7. Promote diversity of learning styles and methods as different learning styles require different teaching methods.
8. Assess appropriately by using the assessment method that best fits the learning content and context.

3.2.3 Student Outcomes

The Curriculum Commission has outlined a number of broad capabilities that all graduates should be supported to develop through their studies. These capabilities have been deconstructed and revised for the Pre-Tertiary context and underpin the outcomes that graduates of Pre-Tertiary courses at Victoria University will be expected to achieve. Victoria University Pre-Tertiary graduates will be supported to:

- appreciate diversity and the potential benefits to their trade, occupation or field
- understand their trade, occupation or field in the context of employment, broader industry and national and global economies
- share their skills and knowledge to benefit their workplaces and communities
- work according to principles of equity and sustainability
- participation is monitored and follow up action is taken including through referral to appropriate services
- undertake their responsibilities as employees and citizens in a highly interdependent global community
- apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills to challenges that arise in their trade, occupation or field
- apply research, analytical and technical skills to create innovations in their trade, occupation or field
- communicate effectively using a range of strategies and technologies
- contribute to the development of knowledge and skills in their industry, occupation or field
- plan, monitor and evaluate to achieve personal, career and community goals.



PART 4: BLENDED LEARNING STRATEGY

4.1 CONTEXT

Implementation of an innovative, institution-wide approach to blended learning will be central to learning and teaching development strategies at Victoria University into the future. The Strategic Plan states that we will become *well known for our blended model of e-learning, on-campus and work-based learning* and the Eight Propositions paper from the Curriculum Commission foreshadowed a *strengthened commitment to the provision of blended learning at Victoria University*.

4.1.1 Approaches to Blended Learning

While blended learning is a very prominent concept within e-learning discussions, both within Australia and internationally, no single definition or approach generally holds sway. Broadly speaking, blended learning – otherwise referred to as hybrid learning or mixed-mode learning – is usually seen as a mix of face-to-face (f2f) and online delivery, and may refer to the mix of delivery across a whole institution, across a whole course, or within individual units of study.

Sometimes the focus is on the relative proportion of time spent in class and online, but as Hartman (2010) comments *“to the more experienced institutions, blending is an optimisation of pedagogical approaches rather than a time division between online and F2F.”*²⁷

To other commentators, it's the blending process that matters, Anthony Picciano (2011) from the *City of New York University Hybrid Initiative* comments that blending with purpose is *“... the artful design of a teaching and learning experience that leverages instruction, technology, administrative and support services, into a natural experience for learner and teacher.”*²⁸

In terms of ensuring both quality and sustainability, the US-based Sloan Consortium, a not-for-profit consortium of individuals, institutions and organisations committed to quality online education, has put forward five Quality Pillars of Blended Learning: learning effectiveness, cost effectiveness, faculty satisfaction, student satisfaction and access.²⁹ Arguably these Pillars are relevant within the Australian context also.

4.2 BLENDED LEARNING IN THE CURRENT VU CONTEXT

Motivations for increasing the emphasis on blended approaches to learning at Victoria University are not hard to find. The distinctive profile of the University has clear implications for the modes of course delivery: spread over a large number of campuses in the CBD and the rapidly growing west of Melbourne, Victoria University provides learning opportunities to diverse student cohorts across the AQF spectrum, including school-leavers who may or may not be digitally savvy, others from technology-poor families recently arrived in Australia, plus a large fraction of time-poor adult learners with varying priorities and life commitments. The University teaches increasingly into a dispersed range of workplaces and learning locations, has a high percentage of its students located off-shore, recognises that effective and engaging teaching requires active learning approaches, and aspires to be an excellent 21st Century university, immersed within a digital age.

Innovative blended teaching approaches are already evident at Victoria University amongst early adopters, and interest in current issues such as the introduction of a new e-learning environment (including the new Learning Management System (LMS)) and ways to use social media effectively in teaching is high. However the use of our e-learning tools is not well supported by systems and procedures, and is currently somewhat ad-hoc and patchy. Without a more coordinated approach, the learning experience that our students encounter is likely to be a combination of innovative learning experiences mixed with 'stand and deliver' approaches to teaching. Our learning resources and spaces – both physical and virtual – will not be used to their full potential, and the varying needs of our diverse student cohorts for flexible approaches to course delivery are unlikely to be met fully.

It's now time to overthrow mantras that mainstream tertiary teaching necessarily takes place face-to-face for a prescribed number of hours per week. Instead, institution-wide approaches to blending learning can explore efficient and flexible ways to make use of staff and students' time, by providing educational approaches that prioritise active and engaging student learning while being aligned with the contexts and priorities of our students. Such approaches would reflect the ways in which many of our students are already interacting socially and increasingly find themselves working professionally through a wide range of virtual as well as face-to-face interactions, while also providing structured support for student cohorts from technology poor backgrounds.

²⁷ dl.ucf.edu/files/2010/04/Online-blended-generations-presentation.ppt

²⁸ Picciano, A., CUNY, Sloan Conference 2011 <http://sloanconsortium.org/sites/default/files/Blended%20Models%20Panel%203-26-11.pptx>

²⁹ <http://sloanconsortium.org/aboutus>

4.3 STRUCTURE FOR A NEW VU BLENDED LEARNING STRATEGY

The following outlines a structure for a distinctive VU Blended Learning Strategy, made up of:

- A clear conceptualisation of what purposeful blended learning encompasses at Victoria University.
- Agreement on principles-based standards for blended learning.
- Development of evidence informed support materials, exemplars and strategies including just-in-time approaches to professional development.
- Implementation of blended learning approaches within a systematic, 'collaborative curriculum intensives' approach to curriculum development.
- Focus on strategic priorities that are aligned with curriculum renewal.
- Embedding evaluation of blended learning implementation strategies as part of scholarly practice, in order to improve student outcomes.

4.3.1 A Victoria University Conceptualisation of Blended Learning

An institutional approach that purposefully blends modes of student learning might involve active learning through face-to-face and/or online delivery, independent learning taking place online or in a library or in the professional workplace, collaborative learning in physical and virtual innovative learning spaces, and tailored delivery within international and off-campus partnerships. In each case and at every AQF level, the nature of the blend should be chosen to suit the intended learning outcomes of the course or unit involved, and designed to optimise use of available resources in order to ensure sustainability of the approach taken.

Blended learning that focuses on learning outcomes requires close collaboration between Information Technology Services (ITS) and learning and teaching e-learning teams, in order to ensure that effective innovation is primarily lead by educational needs, rather than being driven by technological trends. As an added complexity – but also an added opportunity to add richness to the blend – the use of e-technology-rich classrooms and informal learning spaces is fast becoming the status quo on Australian university campuses.

At Victoria University, significant resources have gone into the development of technology-rich learning spaces such as *learning commons* and *classrooms of the future* over the last few years.

Currently the University is developing a strategy for the use of *community-integrated learning centres* to meet tertiary education needs within the outer urban rim of Melbourne's West. It's clear that consideration of e-learning and e-technologies cannot be carried out in isolation from the planning processes for physical learning spaces, both formal and informal. We propose to include consideration of both virtual and physical learning spaces within the VU Blended Learning Strategy.

An effective blended learning approach also needs to encompass opportunities for 'blending in' learning resources and approaches from outside the institution. The increasing availability of Open Educational Resources (OERs) provides new options for doing just that – and, in turn, for interested staff to gain prominence by contributing their learning resources for more general use.

The rapid rise of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs), together with the accompanying experimentation with certification by world-renowned universities such as MIT, might be seen as a threat to Victoria University. However obtaining a certificate of completion for a MOOC does not (yet) entitle students to achieving a qualification.

Instead, it is possible that this development could provide new opportunities for Victoria University students to make use of available OER/MOOC resources as online 'tutorial resources' to support their VU studies. Students who obtain MOOC certificates of completion could add to them to their resumé on graduation, as recognition for study with international universities that offer access to MOOC learning experiences.

Currently much is unclear about how OERs – and MOOCs in particular – may develop into the future, but the possibilities that these developments might present for innovative learning opportunities could, and should, be explored further within the implementation of a VU Blended Learning Strategy.

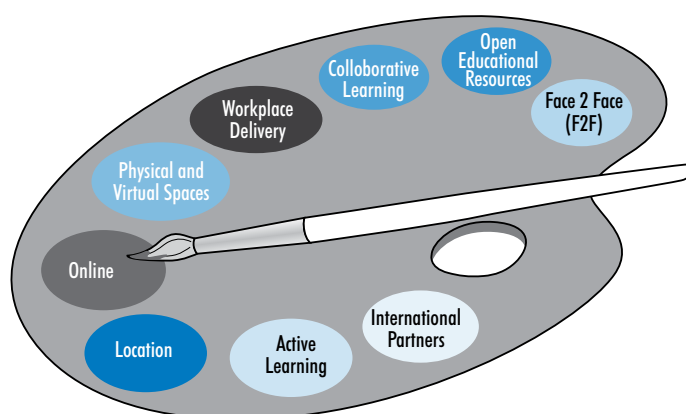


Figure 3: 'Blending with Purpose' within the VU Context

Successfully implemented, this rich approach to blended learning at Victoria University could provide both enriched learning experiences for our diverse range of student cohorts, plus a real opportunity for Victoria University to become widely known for its institutional approach to blending learning that helps it fulfil its distinctive mission.

Action 1:

Blended learning at Victoria University takes place across the levels of the AQF and in a range of contexts, including multiple campus locations, workplace delivery and delivery by external partners (both local and international). The Blended Learning Strategy at Victoria University will:

- prioritise the purposeful blending of face-to-face and online learning through sustainable approaches that are focused on supporting intended learning outcomes
- include consideration of the design, use and evaluation of both physical and virtual learning spaces and learning locations.

4.3.2 Principles-based Approach to Blended Learning

Currently, Victoria University approaches to blended learning include examples of excellent practice, but lack coordinated support and consistency in expectations. Victoria University's 'early adopters' amongst the teaching staff are already engaging with a wide range

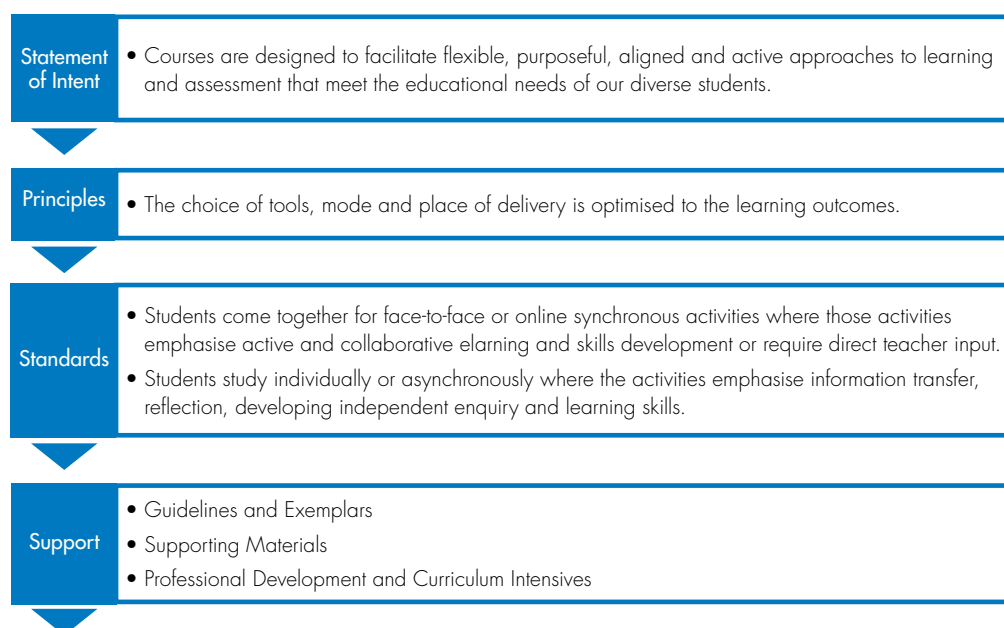
of e-learning tools (internal and external to the University) in order to deliver courses across the AQF spectrum into multiple locations and in diverse contexts. Any attempt to provide a more consistent learner experience by imposing a standardised, one-size-fits-all model is likely to meet with mixed success at best.

Instead, we propose that the implementation of an institutional strategy for purposeful, blended learning at Victoria University should initially focus on the development of agreed principles-based standards – not standardisation – for purposeful blending of face-to-face and e-learning in diverse contexts. Course development, approval and review would then be expected to be consistent with the blended learning standards on an ongoing basis.

Initially, it is proposed to develop this principles-based approach in the context of the forthcoming adoption of the new LMS. The impending shift to the new LMS provides a real opportunity to establish a more consistently structured online learning environment for students, by setting minimum standards for online materials and providing support for teaching staff to meet (and exceed) those standards.

As one example – and subject to further consultation – **Figure 4** below outlines this approach, choosing one overarching statement of intent, then giving an example of a related principle, then outlining associated standards, related support materials and suggested strategies. Proposed support materials and strategies to support this principles-based strategy would be developed and then refined subject to user feedback.

Figure 4: Example of the Proposed Principles-based Approach to Blended Learning



A resources and needs analysis of Victoria University's physical learning spaces will also be undertaken during the next six months, in collaboration with teaching areas and with the Facilities unit and the ITS audio-visual support team. As part of this proposed approach, the aim would be to produce a complementary set of principles, standards and resources to support the effective and innovative use and further development of physical learning spaces at the University.

Action 2:

The Blended Learning Strategy at Victoria University will be built upon principles-based standards that are evidence-informed and used to signal consistency in expectations. The development of principles, standards, exemplars and supporting materials will be informed by feedback from both staff and students.

Action 3:

As part of a new approach to course development and approval arising from the Curriculum Framework and The VU Agenda, proposals for course accreditation and review will be required into the future to be certified as meeting (or exceeding) the blended learning standards.

4.3.3 Supporting Blended Learning at VU

As illustrated in **Figure 4**, a standards-based approach to blended learning should include an effective support strategy that can draw on a range of resources within systematic approaches to supporting teaching staff. The provision of effective support to staff during what may represent a disruptive change to teaching practices needs to represent a key component within this proposed Strategy.

Informal support for teaching teams can include just-in-time strategies such as help desk support and web-based FAQ, guidelines, exemplars and templates. The transition strategy for supporting teaching teams to move their units of study to the new LMS can be used to introduce and promote blended learning approaches.

Formal support can be embedded within compulsory induction and ongoing professional development requirements and options for teaching staff, including the Graduate Certificate of Tertiary Education. In the case of the GCTE, the way the course itself is delivered should model 'good practice' examples of blended learning.

Options for developing new approaches to blended learning at Victoria University should also be embedded within the Curriculum Framework's renewal process for courses. In particular, the use of a curriculum development intensives methodology in collaboration with teaching teams is currently under consideration, as a means to introduce new Career Start degrees and renew current Victoria

University courses. Aspects of the blended learning strategy could underpin both the implementation and the intended outcomes of this curriculum development intensives approach.

Action 4:

Teams of teaching staff members will be supported through:

- *Formal GCTE studies designed to model blended learning approaches*
- *Informal, just-in-time professional development that promotes engaging, evidence-informed blended learning strategies to teaching teams and assists them to meet and exceed the VU Blended Learning Standards.*

Action 5:

Blended learning approaches will be embedded within a systematic, collaborative methodology for curriculum development and review, as a central part of the implementation of the Curriculum Framework.

4.3.4 Setting Blended Learning Priorities

Adoption of the standards-based approach proposed earlier will provide a more consistent blended learning experience across all Victoria University courses and for all students. This non-prescriptive approach proposed above should engage teaching staff members who are already e-learning 'early adopters', while also supporting the professional development of staff members who have been cautious or even overtly reluctant to adopt blended learning approaches in the past.

In addition, and mindful of limited available resources, during the implementation of the Curriculum Framework it will be important to select a smaller number of strategic areas for more intensive development and implementation of blended learning approaches.

This approach should prioritise further development of innovative courses and flexible educational approaches that can make a significant impact on learning and career outcomes for current students and attract more students into studying with Victoria University, both within Australia and abroad.

For example, a heightened emphasis on collaborative blended learning approaches across all courses could be used to support the Curriculum Framework focus on 21st capabilities such as problem solving, team work and inter-cultural skills, within our student communities, both in Australia and overseas. Collaborative tools associated with the new e-learning environment, together with the availability of both formal and informal technology-rich learning spaces on campuses, provide new possibilities to support

collaborative learning amongst Victoria University students. These developments will require us to reconsider our approaches to the design of learning and assessment tasks, in order to ensure that collaboration is emphasized in ways that support deep learning and integrity of assessment outcomes.

Recommendation F below lists some specific priority areas that could be considered for more intensive blended learning development. This will complement staged work to be done in collaboration with teaching teams, in order to satisfy the blended learning principles across all courses, during the 3–5 year implementation period for the Curriculum Framework.

Action 6:

Specific priority areas that are aligned with the strategic directions within The VU Blueprint will be targeted for intensive blended learning development. These could include:

- i Promotion of blended learning approaches within all Victoria University courses that make full use of collaborative tools associated with the new e-learning environment.
- ii The development of blended learning in priority courses such as:
 - a New Victoria University Career Start Bachelor Degrees.
 - b A selected number of innovative Professional Degrees that showcase Victoria University distinctive specialisations.
 - c Distinctive Masters suites of courses that are identified to have the potential for greatly increased demand if taught mostly or fully online to both a local and international market.
 - d The first stage of Bachelor degree suites that will be offered in community-integrated learning centres in Melbourne's outer urban rim in collaboration with local councils.
- iii The identification and use of suitable Open Educational Resources (including elements of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCS) that can be used 'tutorial style', in order to supplement our teaching and provide VU students with extra opportunities for recognition and certification.³⁰

³⁰ and in some cases, the local creation of OERs



4.5 GOVERNANCE OF BLENDED LEARNING

A formal governance structure consisting of a small Steering Committee and larger Advisory Group has been established, in order to ensure that the University continues to develop its approach to – and support for – blended learning.

4.6 EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH SCHOLARLY OUTCOMES

Implementing blended learning approaches within the context of the Curriculum Framework will inevitably require significant effort and resources. It will be crucial – though far from easy – to put into place strategies to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness, in terms of improving the learning outcomes and graduate satisfaction of student cohorts. These overall strategies to monitor and analyse student data will be needed to evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the Curriculum Framework.





PART 5: SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

5.1 CONTEXT

Victoria University has a proud history of dedication to social inclusion. We are now in the position to build on this history and develop our social inclusion agenda with governments and other stakeholders to ensure that social inclusion is integral to all our work.³¹

The Social Inclusion sub-strategy addresses the need to widen the educational participation of people who live in the West (and beyond) and places this within the context of the new funding arrangements arising from the social inclusion agenda of Local, State and Federal Governments. These have developed a number of goals for Higher Education and the VET sector to support the growth of socially inclusive organisations which better meet the needs of students who do not come from education-rich backgrounds. This sub-strategy explores the ways in which the University will engage with federal targets and develop our broader social inclusion agenda.

5.2 DEFINING SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion has been described in various ways including as a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.³²

There has been a growing recognition both nationally and internationally of a widening gap between those who enjoy stable economic prosperity and all that flows from that (a sense of social cohesion, access to high-quality education, technologies and healthcare, a high sense of civic and community engagement) and those who have a more fragile connection with the workplace, with social networks and services, with good health and wellbeing and with the educational opportunities which might generate economic prosperity through secure and productive employment.

Educational achievement is cited as a key means of increasing social inclusion through improving social and cultural capital, community connections, social integration and – in particular – employment opportunities.³³

In terms of an individual university's capacity to create the environment for students to succeed in this way, it is critical that the university has a coherent and systematic approach to these matters, one which positions student success at the centre of our work and which spans administrative, governmental and academic domains.

Victoria University has many of these elements in place, yet our data suggests that some work more smoothly and cohesively than others. Victoria University's Tertiary Curriculum Framework, see Part 2, offers a systematic approach to the ways in which the University will address the challenges that arise from the massification of tertiary education – in particular, the curriculum and support needs of students who do not come from education-rich backgrounds in order to enable them to achieve and succeed.³⁴ In doing so, it proposes a suite of curriculum changes designed to develop both the students' and the organisation's offerings to assist in the national aims outlined in **Table 1** below.

³¹ The sub-strategy has been informed by the findings of the Office for Learning and Teaching project *Effective teaching and support of students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds: Resources for Australian higher education*. See www.lowses.edu.au/

³² Social Inclusion Unit, Dept. Prime Minister and Cabinet (2008) *Social Inclusion. Origins, concepts and key themes*, Commonwealth of Australia, p. 4.

³³ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2008) *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society, volume 2*, Paris: OECD.

³⁴ See www.lowses.edu.au/; www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/transitionpedagogy/

Table 1: National priorities for social inclusion

Commonwealth Government and Council of Australian Government targets for attainment and participation by 2020:
Halve the proportion of Australians aged 20-64 years without a certificate level 3 qualification
Double the number of higher qualification completions (diplomas and advanced diplomas)
Halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 or equivalent attainment
20 per cent of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level will be of people from low SES backgrounds and;
Raise the proportion of young people achieving Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 90 percent by 2015
40 per cent of all 25-34 year olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above by 2025.

5.3 TARGET GROUPS

The goal of social inclusion has historically been embedded throughout the University's policies and practices, and we are now in a position to extend this commitment using a more strategic approach which is framed by the Australian government's undertaking to support universities to become more inclusive. We see this as a scaffolded, strategic process that involves close cooperation between the University, community organisations, and its partner schools. Victoria University has had, and continues to have, a commitment to giving our stakeholders – students, communities, industry and government – an ongoing continuous improvement cycle where individuals can aspire to greater educational success, can access the university's programs, and are given support to achieve their qualification. This is an ongoing cycle and our aspiration is that we will serve our stakeholders through enabling them to easily move through this cycle a number of times, if they wish.

Victoria University will focus on three specific groups of students whose aspiration, access and achievement rates are currently less robust than they might be. These are:³⁵

- students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent
- students with disabilities.

Victoria University does well in terms of providing access to the University for these cohorts; it does less well at retaining them – in addition to other students. In other words, we have not yet created an environment where all students can succeed and in this we do our students a disservice.

There are strong economic (for example loss of student revenues³⁶) – as well as social justice reasons – to continue developing a strategic approach to retention, which assumes that this is a non-negotiable issue of concern to all members of staff, no matter what their role within the organisation.

Our focus will be to build on the work that is already being undertaken across the University and implement a more strategic approach to retention.

³⁵ We recognise that early school leavers are also a uniquely disadvantaged cohort. Their needs are addressed in VU's Youth Strategy.

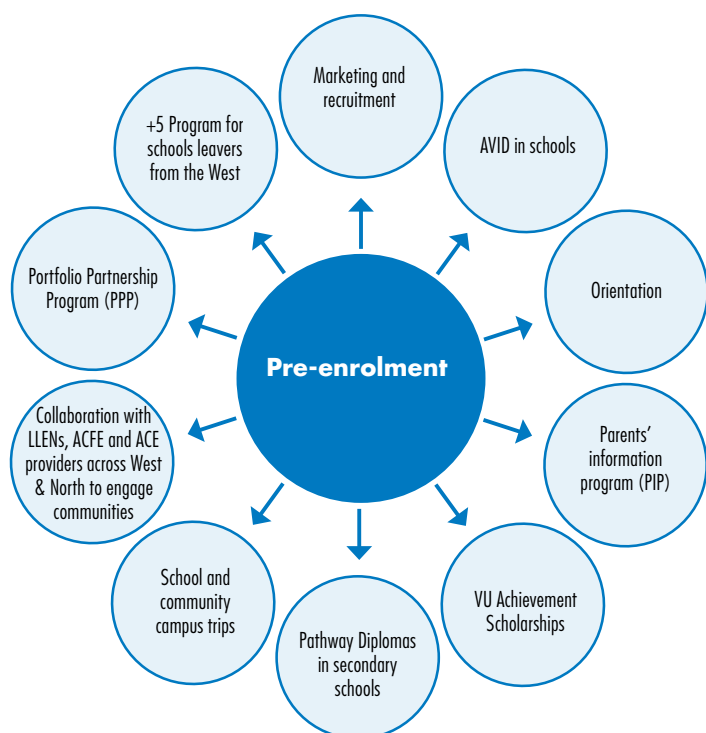
³⁶ See www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/2010_Adams_Banks_Davies_Dickson_Wed_1100_B_Gall.B._Paper.pdf

5.4 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES PRE-ENROLMENT

Victoria University will initiate and support more strategic partnerships and collaborations with schools and other educational stakeholders to assist them in raising the expectation amongst secondary students, their families and their communities that at the end of Year 12 they will be in the position to choose whether to enrol at TAFE or Higher Education. This will be achieved through a range of activities designed to better prepare students for tertiary entrance and success, but also by engaging their families in university life.

There will be a number of initiatives (for example, Portfolio Partnership Program, the +5 program, VU Achievement scholarships) that will assist future students access the University and this will be augmented by the introduction of a range of Career Start and Professional Bachelor Degrees, which will equip students with a range of academic literacies designed to support their future success.

Figure 5: Summary of Strategic Initiatives Pre-enrolment



5.5 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES POST-ENROLMENT

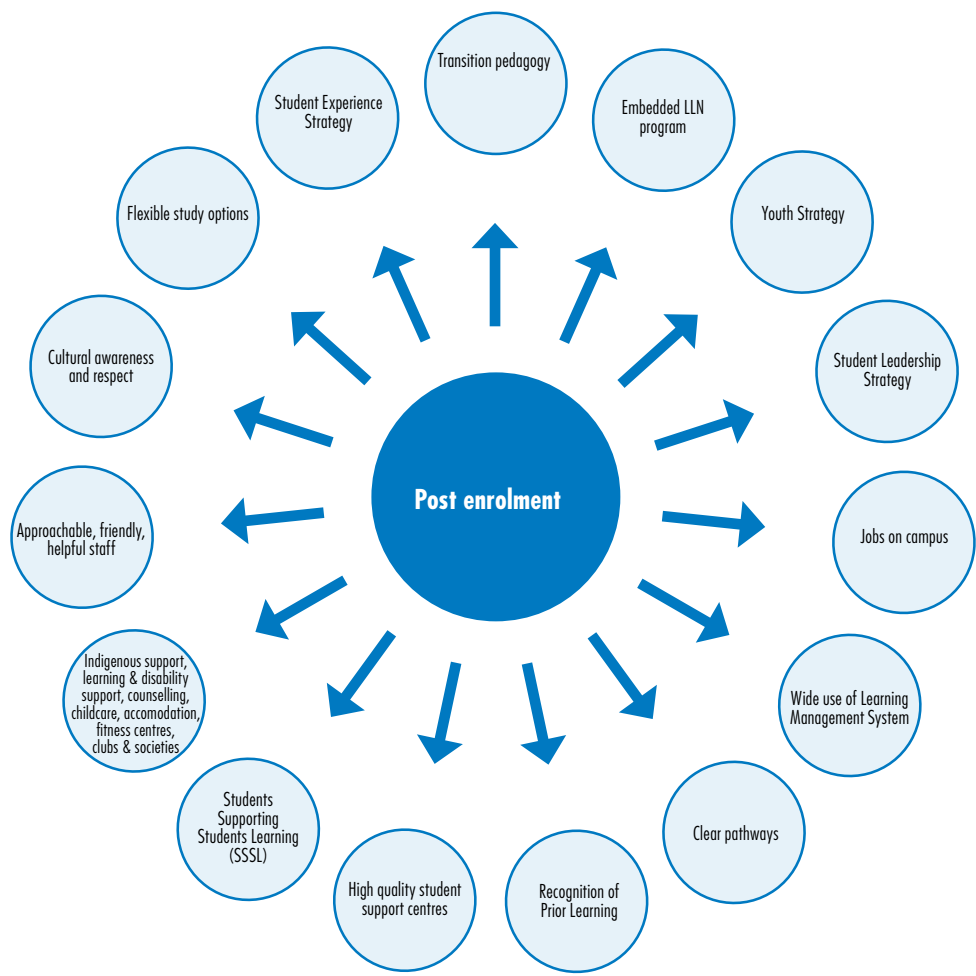
It is clear that the early experiences of all students are critical to their sense of belonging and commitment to the University, closely followed by their experiences in the classroom generally and their perception of the quality of their learning experience. It is within this context that both academic and professional staff members will work closely together to ensure, particularly, that students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds are supported to excel. This will involve both academic and social matters. Figure 6 offers an overview of the ways in which both Colleges and Shared Services will hold responsibility for ensuring that all students' needs are catered for and that no student will be left untouched by a range of empowering and enabling strategies to support them to succeed.

We are focussed on the ways in which Victoria University works with our students to help them attain their qualification. In doing so, we will analyse, track and set targets at a College level for improvements in the retention and success rates for our target groups.

Working within the current policy framework of the Federal Government, we are now in the position of being funded to work more strategically with our students, and to facilitate an improvement in their retention and success rates – especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will assess any new initiative in terms of its longevity and its impact on our stakeholder groups.

The success of the strategies below will increase the university's overall retention rate, which will, in turn, produce very significant financial benefits. It will also improve the student experience and increase the university's reputation as a proactive provider of choice for all students.

Figure 6: Summary of Strategic Initiatives Post-enrolment



The Social Inclusion Sub-strategy encompass a whole-of-university approach. The aim is to have a significant impact on the aspirations, achievement, accessibility and attainment of all our future and current students and stakeholders.

This will be achieved through practical initiatives such as:

1. The use of transition pedagogy (see Section 3, Pre-Tertiary Curriculum Framework), designed to facilitate success for Victoria University students at identified transition hot spots such as first year of study at any level.
2. The generation and promotion of a 'help-seeking' culture within the University where students are actively assisted as a normal part of all staff members' responsibilities – particularly during the early weeks of the teaching period.
3. Provision to all staff (professional, academic, casual and permanent) of the professional development necessary for them to become confident and competent at dealing with students from our targets groups. For new staff, this should be provided routinely as part of the induction process.
4. Commissioning a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Scholarship Strategy which responds to the recent Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report, and reports annually to the ERB with resulting recommendations from the Board.³⁷
5. Increased support for students with a disability using the University's Disability Action Plan, including 'best-practice' model development which benchmarks our practices against other, more successful, organisations.
6. Use of annual targets for each College, within the Student Profile Plan, VU College and the VU Trades College (Trades Academy from 2014) for the recruitment, enrolment, retainment and success of students from each targeted group – to be negotiated annually with the Dean of the College and reported to the ERB each December, with resulting recommendations from the Board.
7. Coordination of all staff engaged in student retention by the VU College to ensure consistent and comparable inputs and outcomes.

³⁷ See www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Indigenous/ReviewOfIndigenousHigherEducation/FinalReport/IHERFinalReport.pdf



PART 6: NEXT STEPS

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION

The Tertiary Curriculum Framework and its six sub-strategies³⁸ will be the overarching framework for learning and teaching in the University. It will underpin improvements in the quality and distinctiveness of the student experience at Victoria University.

The approved recommendations will form the basis of a 3–5 year plan for curriculum reform at Victoria University. The plan will be finalised in collaboration with the Pro Vice Chancellors, Colleges, Distinctive Specialisations, College Deans and College staff. Most of the curriculum reform work will be undertaken by College academic staff with time release assisted by specialist curriculum support staff.

There are several components of the work that have University-wide relevance and a number of staff have already shown interest in being part of these activities. We propose to establish a number of reference groups to commence work on some of these cross-university projects such as:

- Inter-disciplinary capability development units.
- Design of career-focused general degrees.
- The development of a Victoria University approach to problem solving.
- Implementing transitions pedagogy for transitions hot spots.
- Scaffolding research and inquiry skills into all tertiary learning at Victoria University.
- Postgraduate qualifications for the 21st Century.

The Academic and Students portfolio is committed to working with the Colleges to achieve the ambitious goals set by the Strategic Plan through this curriculum reform program. We recognise the importance of the Victoria University staff feedback analysed for the *Beyond Silos report*³⁹, understanding the key message that a consistently excellent and distinctive student experience must be underpinned by a new, collaborative, organisational culture. We believe that such a culture is implicit in, and necessary for the implementation of, the recommendations contained in this report. *Capabilities for the Future* is a specification for teaching as much as for learning and cannot be implemented without the application of the change factors described in the *Beyond Silos report*: consistency, collaboration, letting go; and above all trust.

³⁸ NB of the original 8 sub-strategies specified in the Strategic Plan, the Tertiary Curriculum Framework is one and the original Integrated Education Sub-Strategy is now subsumed into the Tertiary Curriculum Framework

³⁹ Conway, Maree (2012) *Beyond Silos: Report on VU Agenda Consultation Workshops*. 18 - 29 June

