

**JCU Learning and Teaching**  
**Blueprint 2014 – 2016**





# JCU Learning and Teaching Blueprint 2014 – 2016

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### University Plan 2013-2017: Learning and Teaching

#### STATEMENT OF CONTEXT

Over the past triennium we have enacted an institution wide curriculum vision that seeks to align our courses and their delivery with the University's Strategic Intent and four tropical themes. Our staff have been recognised for their outstanding contributions to student learning through national teaching awards and citations, and we have established a Teaching and Learning Academy to provide an explicit focus on the scholarship of learning and teaching.

With the advent of a new national regulatory and quality assurance framework, we have taken on the challenge of managing growth and widening participation while maintaining our commitment to quality and excellence. We will continue to refine our policies, practices and processes to assure academic standards, quality and integrity and to embed a culture of continuous improvement, informed by scholarship, practice and meaningful learning and teaching data. We will also continue to ensure that our professional programs secure accreditation to meet community and professional needs and to remain at the forefront of national and international best practice.

We recognise that knowledge has the power to change lives and we are committed to meeting the learning and support needs of all students. We will continue to focus on improving retention and the student experience and respond to the impact of attrition and retention on the viability of our programs. In particular, James Cook University will strive to improve access and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from non-traditional and disadvantaged backgrounds.

## Learning and Teaching Blueprint 2014-2016: Preamble

The current higher education environment of technology disruption, widening participation, increasing global competition and regulation requires a systematic and coordinated response. Building on our reputation for quality learning and teaching and on the work of *JCU: The Future* Taskforce that has given stronger expression and effect to JCU's Strategic Intent under a developing grand challenges framework, this Blueprint sets out our aspirational and priority agenda for the next three years with strategies to achieve the learning and teaching objectives of the University Plan as well as prioritisation of agreed areas for investment in the short and medium term. While this BluePrint presents a holistic and whole-of-institution perspective, Divisions and Colleges will be asked to develop and implement their own strategies in alignment with these institutional priorities.

The Learning and Teaching Blueprint is informed by our Strategic Intent and stated graduate attributes and the recommendations articulated in the Taskforce's *Crystallising our Purpose* Report as the *JCU Model for learning teaching, research and engagement*:

- Focused on the tropics
- Research rich
- Student focused
- Connected to community
- Internationally engaged
- Culturally informed

Consistent with the work already being undertaken under the auspices of the *JCU: The Future* Taskforce, we acknowledge that face-to-face and on-campus delivery, including the promotion of place-based learning at our tropical and world heritage located campuses and field locations, will remain an important aspect of the JCU student experience. We acknowledge too, the challenges that emerge from the dimensionality of our programs, in terms of mode and location of our discipline offerings, and the myriad of professional accreditation requirements across our various course offerings. All learning however, will be increasingly enabled by online affordances and we need to engage robustly with **blended learning designs** that improve the student experience and build connections between staff and students and across student groups.

These blended learning designs will include the use of online affordances to **enhance** (for example, deliver additional materials to supplement face to face experiences) or fundamentally **transform** (for example, 'flipped classroom' or entirely online) learning. In all cases, **intentional** student centred blended learning design will be our goal, informed and supported by:

- Our *Blended Learning Policy*,
- Sound and fit for purpose infrastructure,
- A strong research and evidence base, and
- A sharp focus on the student voice – from student evaluations of learning and teaching as well as a range of proactive student engagement strategies.

A distinctive JCU curriculum model, as articulated and progressed under the Taskforce's *Crystallising our Purpose* Report, requires the alignment of course learning outcomes and curriculum components – **content, pedagogy and assessment** – to our strategic goals. The **content (knowledge, skills and application of knowledge and skills)** of our curriculum must be contemporary, research informed and well oriented to JCU's strategic focus in our tropical region, including our focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

To respond effectively to our diverse cohorts of students, academic staff need to be supported to demonstrate a repertoire of inclusive teaching strategies or **pedagogies**. While such a repertoire of teaching strategies and authentic learning experiences (for example, simulations, clinical placements, practicums) is essential, collaborative, peer-to-peer and personalised, self directed learning opportunities are also vital to engage our diverse student cohorts. In addition, increasingly technology enabled teaching strategies will be required of all staff for effective learning design.

Over the next three years we will seek to actively engage academic staff in the development of learning designs and pedagogies that encourage students to 'make a difference' in response to the **grand challenges** facing the tropics. These include work-integrated learning, problem-based learning, service learning, field experiences and learning in remote, regional and international settings. These more 'activist' and experiential pedagogies are consistent with our Strategic Intent to 'make a difference' in the tropics. The student experience will be enabled by professional and academic partnerships that support student learning, career development and transitions in, through and out to the workforce and further study.

To assure learning, our **assessment** practices need to enable valid and reliable demonstration of student achievement of articulated course learning outcomes and align to the pedagogies and teaching strategies employed. The JCU *Learning Teaching and Assessment Policy* already expresses the requirement for diverse assessment strategies and, over the next three years, we will seek to balance a focus on examinations with more engaging, authentic and technology enabled practices, affording students opportunities to demonstrate their learning using a range of modes.

With the implementation of *I2A*, *Blackboard Analytics for Learn* and the YourJCU survey system (and other analytics applications that might be implemented in the future), we have an opportunity to enact student centred, data driven, evidenced based reforms to learning and teaching. The JCU Offer Strategy builds on this evidence base and provides another obvious reference point for Divisions and Colleges. Coupled with active collaboration with students, we will be well positioned to achieve our stated objectives and an excellent JCU student experience.

## OBJECTIVE 1

*Continue to develop and assure high quality learning environments that emphasise the Curriculum Refresh themes, in particular our tropical focus.*

### Strategies

1. Adopt a revised course design, approval and review process that embeds the JCU Model and is enabled by a robust curriculum management system.
2. As anticipated in the *Crystallising our Purpose* Report and JCU Offer Strategy, embark on an immediate, evidence-based review of all current subject and course offerings to assess their alignment with our strategic priorities, the workforce needs of our regions, student demand, financial viability and the link to quality research, with a view to disestablishing offerings that are no longer viable and/or adequately aligned.
3. Develop an evidence-based strategy for campus differentiation, in collaboration with the new academic Divisions and the DVC (Global Strategy and Engagement).
4. Promote and support academic staff to adopt learning designs and teaching strategies that enable graduates to make a difference – including work-integrated learning, problem based learning, service learning, experiential learning and an increasingly globalised experience.
5. Embed a robust program of staff development to ensure graduates are culturally informed and enabled to contribute to Reconciliation.
6. Actively engage staff in the teaching-research nexus as a core component of curriculum design for all courses.
7. Ensure a high quality transition and first year experience through a coordinated whole of University approach to cohort identity building, timely access to student support and inclusive curriculum design.
8. Embed career development learning and other relevant strategies in course design to optimize career readiness and the transition to the globalized world of work.
9. Promote well-designed capstone experiences to enhance the transition beyond degree study.
10. Support staff to engage with the grand challenges of the tropics in their curriculum design, particularly in post-graduate offerings.
11. Implement innovative, continuous improvement strategies to support active, coordinated use of student evaluation and feedback data and to close the feedback loop.
12. Revise and streamline learning and teaching policies, in particular policies related to assessment to ensure a focus on engaging and proactive assessment for learning.
13. Promote the development of annual Divisional course development and review planning to anticipate new course developments, major amendments and course disestablishments in a properly planned and proactive way (for example, by way of an annual Divisional Course Profile or Plan).

### Priority Resourcing

<b>ICT Infrastructure</b>
Curriculum Management System
Interactive software to enable engaging learning design: eg adaptive elearning platforms.
Whole of institution adoption of ePortfolio tool
Resource LTSE website enhancement
<b>Physical infrastructure</b>
Learning spaces to support cohort identity building
<b>Core and Strategic investments</b>
Funding for staff development activities that support Reconciliation
Academic Developers and Educational designers to support academics in course and subject design.
Institutional First Year Coordinator position and Retention Coordinator position
Student Survey coordinator
Institutional support and coordination of work integrated learning partnerships



## OBJECTIVE 2

*Build and enhance teaching capacity and learning leadership through the delivery of appropriate professional development opportunities and other targeted support.*

### Strategies

1. Support staff to engage actively with JCU's distinctive curriculum focus and directions in blended learning through targeted professional development and the deployment of educational designers to work with course teams.
2. Increase the focus on collaboration across professional and academic staff and target funding for innovation.
3. Align academic staff recruitment, promotion and performance development to reinforce high quality and innovative learning and teaching and JCU's distinctive curriculum.
4. Provide support and professional learning opportunities for academics to actively engage with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives – in both curriculum and pedagogy.
5. Embed a robust program of peer review and staff performance development related to learning and teaching.
6. Design, review and benchmark induction and professional learning programs for all academic staff to ensure support for high quality innovative learning and teaching aligned to our Strategic Intent.
7. Develop and enact clear and consistent position descriptions for learning and teaching leaders across the University and ensure resourcing and the provision of support for these key leadership positions (for example, Associate Deans Learning and Teaching, First Year Experience Coordinators, Course Coordinators).
8. Actively promote and support staff to participate in opportunities for learning and teaching scholarship through the promotion of internal and national grants and award programs and the JCU Learning and Teaching Academy.
9. Develop and embed performance measures for Divisions and Colleges and academic leadership of those organisational areas to drive strategic directions for learning and teaching at JCU.

### Priority resourcing

<b>ICT infrastructure</b>
Performance development software (ensuring integration with current HR and other systems/software)
Interactive software to enable interactive online learning

<b>Core and Strategic investments</b>
Appropriate workload allocations for all learning leadership positions
Funding to promote innovation and scholarship
Resourcing to support Awards and Grants officer
Resourcing for comprehensive sessional staff induction and development
Resourcing for staff development in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

## OBJECTIVE 3

*Deliver flexible and inclusive learning environments that capitalise on both face-to-face and virtual innovations.*

### Strategies

1. Embed a strategic whole of institution approach to blended learning through the implementation of JCU's *Blended Learning Policy*.
2. Consolidate investment in core platforms for blended learning, including a digital object repository, video/lecture capture system and multimedia production, and complementary investment in staff to support key learning platforms and build staff capacity.
3. Develop a Roadmap for investment in learning technologies and the learning management system through the Learning Technologies Advisory Group, in active collaboration with Divisions, College Deans and students.
4. Develop a Roadmap for the strategic and effective utilisation, design and redesign of the physical estate and its learning spaces for the delivery of a high quality on-campus experience, that is flexible and technology enabled, through the Learning Spaces Leadership Group and in active collaboration with Divisions, College Deans, students, ITR and the Estate Office.
5. Actively pursue ongoing review, audit and benchmarking of technology enabled learning spaces, ensuring engagement with student and staff perspectives to create innovative, future oriented collaborative learning spaces.
6. Ensure adequate guidelines and training for all staff in the use of all core platforms, establishing minimum standards for use as appropriate to discipline contexts.
7. Ensure that the Timetable Policy, business rules and processes developed through the implementation of the new timetabling system enable blended learning design.
8. Prioritise the development and transitioning of academic staff to blended learning designs that enable and enhance student learning.
9. Develop innovative approaches to support student readiness to embrace blended learning environments.
10. Support the development of culturally appropriate learning spaces for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.
11. Coordinate the University's response to MOOCs through the endorsement of a JCU MOOC strategy.

### Priority resourcing

<b>ICT infrastructure</b>
Digital Object Repository
Automated video/lecture capture system
Software to enable interactive learning experiences, including multimedia platforms, learning objects, backchannelling tools etc
Interactive multimedia software to support desktop media production
Improved systems for online assignment submission, marking and return
Recording studio for multimedia production on each tropical campus.
<b>Physical infrastructure</b>
Sector benchmarked discipline requirements
Learning spaces for BYOD and collaborative learning modes
Peer to peer learning spaces in courses with low retention.
<b>Core and Strategic investments</b>
Resourcing to support core learning platforms stability and performance
Support for academic staff engagement with new timetabling process
Support for academics to develop multi-media material including self access production facilities
Educational designers to support the transition to blended learning, including the use of ePortfolios.
Funding for brand enhancing MOOCs
Funding for innovative student digital readiness initiatives

## OBJECTIVE 4

*Implement and monitor effective and integrated strategies to improve pathways, retention and the student experience.*

### Strategies

1. Adopt a coordinated and evidenced based approach to pathways, transitions and the first year experience, promoting the use of relevant data to inform strategic initiatives over the course of the JCU student life-cycle.
2. Develop and coordinate appropriate and supported pathway options to higher education, including a single preparatory Diploma of Higher Education to articulate with a robust and accessible preparatory program, and appropriate options for international students.
3. Promote formative assessment in core subjects in first year to support the transition of students to higher education and more authentic assessment across all courses.
4. Ensure resourcing for culturally appropriate preparation, participation and engagement activities developed in partnership with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.
5. Coordinate a research informed whole of University approach to retention through the Retention Working Group and Retention Project Officer including targeted and strategic use of available funding to support diverse learners.
6. Embed relevant support personnel in disciplines and courses (for example, Academic Developers, Educational Designers, Learning Advisors, Library Staff, First Year Co-ordinators, Capstone Co-ordinators).
7. Develop defined capstone experiences in all undergraduate courses to enhance transition to employment and further study.
8. Benchmark and consolidate student advising services to ensure high quality support for student progression.
9. Ensure that postgraduate coursework students have access to the infrastructure and project funding required to complete research subjects.
10. Ensure that the examination of research subjects in honours and coursework masters degrees enables the research capacity of students to be evaluated rigorously as a pathway to research education.

### Priority resourcing

<b>ICT infrastructure</b>
Student Portal
Expansion of Learning and Predictive Analytics
Expanded academic and online assessment and integrity tools
<b>Physical infrastructure</b>
Fit for purpose space for students with disabilities and their relevant support staff
Supported peer to peer and small group learning spaces

<b>Core and Strategic investments</b>
Funding to support appropriate workload allocation for First Year Coordinators
Ongoing learning adviser positions, including English as an Additional language support
Institutional Coordinator, Pathways and Preparatory Programs
Whole of University First Year Experience and Retention Officer positions
Dedicated Maths Access Centres with appropriate staffing
Funding to embed the Peer Assisted Study Scheme (PASS)
Support for course and career advising
Expanded Indigenous Student Mentor program
Support for JCU Professional College

## OBJECTIVE 5

*Refine approaches for mapping, assuring and enhancing course learning outcomes and the collection of assurance of learning data, and develop processes for external benchmarking of academic standards against similar courses of study.*

### *Strategies*

1. Support course coordinators and academic staff to develop coherent course structures to systematically support student achievement of articulated course learning outcomes.
2. Embed practices of consensus moderation across all subjects, courses, and campuses, including Singapore and Brisbane.
3. Expand participation in calibration and benchmarking processes to assure exit standards, including for English language and numeracy proficiency.
4. Reinstate five-year cyclical course reviews, initially for non-accredited courses.
5. Streamline reviews and reporting processes and requirements from course performance reports, professional accreditation and course reviews.
6. Continue engagement with IRU Calibration project and actively seek external benchmarking opportunities.

### *Priority resourcing*

<b>ICT infrastructure</b>
Curriculum Management System inclusive of quality assurance mechanisms, automated subject outline builder, result certification and robust reporting capacities
Tools for assuring learning, including course mapping tool and mechanism for archiving relevant course materials.

<b>Core and Strategic investments</b>
Leadership positions in Divisions and Colleges to support teaching quality and quality assurance
Appropriate workload allocations for learning leaders such as Course Coordinators