

THE NEXT STEPS: DEFINING STANDARDS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING, RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT AT CSU

1.0 Preamble

CSU's *University Strategy 2007-2011* has as its primary aim the improvement of learning and teaching and research in the context of its mission to be a national university *for the professions*. It seeks to build on the achievements of the University in the previous decade to ensure that CSU is positioned securely within the top half of Australian universities for learning and teaching and research quality and that there are aspects of learning and teaching and professional engagement and fields of research in which CSU achieves national leadership and international recognition.

The implementation of the *University Strategy 2007-2011* has already seen changes designed to support improvements in learning and teaching, research and professional engagement. These have included changes recommended in the 2006 paper *Enhancing learning and teaching and research at CSU* and the alignment of budget and infrastructure plans and Divisional structures to support the *University Strategy*.

1.1 Key measures have included:

- A range of staffing related measures: premium HECS funding dedicated to improving academic staff:student ratios; the Strategic Research Professors; Research Centre Fellows and Teaching Fellows Schemes; Strategic Voluntary Separation Scheme for academic staff.
- Workforce planning, including the development of the Discipline Profile and the introduction of the work function of Teaching and Professional academic staff.
- Revisions to expectations of academic staff to align these better with CSU's strategic directions (eg PBF model; Performance Management Guidelines).
- Introduction of CSU Interact.
- Creation of the two Learning and Teaching Institutes (EFPI and FLI).
- The Faculty restructure and the review of the agriculture disciplines.
- Review and restructure of support divisions, including Library Services; CELT/LMC; Student Services; Office of International Relations; Marketing.
- Work Process Improvement and Workplace Productivity Program to achieve efficiencies and improve processes to support the core business of learning and teaching, research and professional engagement.

- The USM Project.
- Subject reduction.
- Discontinuation of low enrolment courses, especially at p/g level.
- Systematic development and review of enabling/infrastructure plans (capital development, information architecture) to ensure alignment with, and support for, core business.
- Adoption of the International Education Strategy
- Development of an Indigenous Education Strategy

These measures will allow CSU to pursue, systematically, further improvements and national leadership and international recognition in the remaining years (to 2011) of the current *University Strategy* and beyond.

1.2 Progress

Progress in the early years of the *University Strategy, 2007-2011* has been good, reflecting a strong commitment to the Strategy amongst members of the University in Faculties and Divisions. Achievements include:

- Meeting increased CGS load targets at a time of strong competition for students and significant demographic change;
- Successfully extending CSU's profile of professional courses (eg introduction of Veterinary Science; Animal Science; and Dentistry);
- Successfully extending CSU's profile of professional courses in DE mode (eg graphic design; food and nutrition; rehabilitation therapies);
- Significantly increasing each year publications and research income;
- National and international recognition for CSU's Research Centres;
- Membership of the ARC's Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security;
- Highly successful initial take up of *CSU Interact* by staff and students;
- Improvements in student satisfaction as indicated in the SEQ and online subject evaluations.

1.3 The need for clear standards

To succeed in achieving the next steps in the *University Strategy 2007-2011* it is important to be clear about the standards CSU wants and needs to achieve by 2011. *A The next Steps: Defining standards in learning and teaching, research and professional engagement at CSU*

shared understanding of standards will assist staff, Schools, Faculties, Centres and Institutes to plan, to set priorities and to manage their performance. It will also assist the Divisions to ensure continuing alignment of their activities with the *University Strategy*. Finally, such an understanding will assist the University to assess its progress towards achieving the *University Strategy*. This will not only inform planning and resource allocation for 2009-2011 but will also assist preparation for the 2009 AUQA audit and for the next five year *University Strategy (2012-2016)*.

Set out below are recommendations regarding the standards CSU should aim to achieve in order to implement successfully its *University Strategy 2007-2011*. The standards build on and reinforce current directions and achievements. Many discipline and research groups in the University will already have met some of the standards or be well on their way to doing so. Only a limited number will have met all the relevant standards. This is not unexpected, as the standards are intended to set goals for improvement.

The standards are partly a response to external expectations of universities. CSU needs to be a successful university against good national and international standards.

Most importantly, however, the standards represent CSU's vision for itself. They are based on CSU's distinctive mission. They represent what CSU as a university wants to be in order to serve its communities, inland, professional, scholarly and international.

2.0 CSU's Standards

- (1) There is one agreed "gold standard" measure for excellence in research, namely the quality of publications. The latter is increasingly linked to the quality ranking of journals and to citations. There is less agreement about how to measure the impact of research. Generally agreed standards of excellence for books, creative works and policy papers have not yet been defined as clearly as for journal articles.
- (2) There is very little evidence of universal "gold standards" in relation to learning and teaching. Some international league tables use input measures (entry standards; staffing ratios) or the proportion of p/g to u/g students. Measures used in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund such as attrition/progress; graduate employment; student satisfaction, contain useful information at the course level but need to be used carefully as indicators of good teaching. Student engagement may prove to be a useful measure but more analysis is required.

If the aim of university education is, according to the National Protocols, to engage students with "advanced knowledge" and "critical inquiry" none of the measures above is very useful. Internal and external peer review of curriculum, the links between teaching, research and professional activity and the quality of final student projects or practicums would be the best indicators or surrogates.

Measures of learning and teaching are also complicated by the fact that some relate to subjects, others to courses and some to learning support provided by Divisions, not teaching staff and Faculties. Responsibility for “good teaching” is thus very diffuse.

- (3) Agreed standards, gold or otherwise, for professional (and industry) engagement in a University positioning itself as a national *university for the professions* do not exist either in Australia or overseas. Possible broad indicators include professional accreditation of courses; achievement of professional outcomes by graduates; high regard by professional bodies/employers for the graduates from our professional programs; effective practice-based learning programs; the quality and quantity of research about professional practice including research undertaken in collaboration with the professions; research impact (especially knowledge transfer to policy and practice within professions).
- (4) In relation to the Divisions, rather than “gold standards”, the important questions are the extent of alignment with, and direct contribution to, the University’s objectives in learning and teaching and research.
- (5) In setting measures and standards for CSU it is important to acknowledge both the varying states of development of fields of study at CSU in relation to research in particular and that special additional resources have been given to selected activities for strategic reasons. For example, a policy of concentration of research resources in a limited number of fields will continue at least for the life of the current *University Strategy*. As a result higher standards will be expected of fields of research concentration than of other fields.
- (6) Measures of performance in learning and teaching, professional engagement and research should focus primarily on Organisational Units (OUs) rather than individual staff. This is because of the importance of critical mass for academic quality and because academic work has, inherently, a collegial or team based character. At CSU the main OU’s are Schools, Disciplines and Research Centres and Divisions.

Individual performance expectations and accountabilities will remain central to meeting standards and will continue to be monitored. They will be set to ensure that the performance of the relevant OU meets CSU’s standards.

3.0 Research

In research it is important to distinguish between fields to which CSU gives priority through the concentration of resources and other fields. For the former CSU must aim to be a national leader. For the latter the aim should be a more general improvement in research performance.

3.1 Priority Fields

For fields of research to which CSU gives priority (ie those covered by research centres in particular) CSU should aim to be ranked at the national or international level as determined by ERA. Research Centre performance in these fields should be significantly superior to that of the University more generally.

Measures of quality should include:

- Quality and quantity of publications (A+ or A level journals or their equivalent in books; an average of at least 3 co-authored publications per head per annum);
- Participation in international and national networks of high quality;
- National and international grants (included in the HERDC collection) at an average of one per Centre Member per annum (ie the total number of Chief Investigators from the Centre on HERDC grants in a specific year is equal to or greater than the number of approved full Centre Members).
- Other evidence of national esteem and international profile;
- Evidence of significant impacts at national and international level including through links to professional activity where appropriate;
- High rankings under ERA.

3.2 General Performance

General performance at School and Discipline level should aim to achieve the following:

- As a minimum meet or exceed the current PBF criteria of 4 publications in B level journals or their equivalent in creative works or better for 80% of eligible teaching and research staff by 2011;
- Increase research income by at least 10% per annum;
- Evidence of national esteem;
- Evidence of impact, including through links to professional activity where appropriate;
- Recognition under ERA as a FOR in which RHD degrees may be offered.

4.0 Learning and Teaching

Standards in learning and teaching must draw on a range of measures and indicators. They also need to be applied at both the course and subject/discipline levels.

For learning and teaching CSU will use measures and standards derived from international league tables and the current LTPF where these are relevant to CSU's mission and strategy. Relevant measures include p/g:u/g ratios; student satisfaction in the CEQ; attrition; and graduate employment.

CSU has available other data which may serve as indicators of good teaching and learning, especially the online evaluations of teaching; the SEQ; and AUSSE. The last, however, is at present only available at university level.

CSU's Discipline Profile data provide valuable indicators, including staff:student and staff:subject ratios and information on links between research and teaching, and professional activity and teaching.

The CSU Degree Initiative will establish generic curriculum standards for CSU's undergraduate degrees. Progress in meeting these standards should be a general expectation at the course level.

Standards for learning and teaching should recognize activities and fields of study (courses and disciplines) to which the *University Strategy 2007-2011* gives priority. Higher standards, involving significant national and international recognition, should be expected in these.

4.1 Priority Fields

CSU's *University Strategy 2007-2011* gives priority to three important strategic directions and, more generally, to education for the professions. The key strategic directions are:

- blended and flexible learning;
- practice based learning for the professions;
- outcomes for low SES students, especially rural and remote and Indigenous, students.

CSU should seek national (top 3) and international recognition for its performance in these strategic activities. In addition, CSU should aim to have at least 10 of its professional fields regarded as leaders in learning and teaching in Australia.

4.1.1 National and International Recognition

- (i) For the key strategic directions in learning and teaching:

- Indicators of national and international esteem: Australian Learning and Teaching Council grants or equivalent; high quality publications in scholarship of learning and teaching; international links and networks; teaching awards.
 - Evidence that CSU's standards for blended and flexible learning are based on best practice and that the standards are successfully embedded in CSU learning and teaching. Evidence for best practice will involve national and international benchmarking; for take up it will include take up of CSU Interact capacities; student feedback as measured in AUSSE, CEQ/SEQ and online subject evaluations.
 - Evidence that CSU's standards in practice based learning are based on best practice and that they have been successfully adopted across CSU's professional course profile. Evidence for best practice will involve national and international benchmarking; for adoption it will include student feedback (AUSSE; CEQ/SEQ; online subject evaluations); curriculum change; self and external review.
 - Evidence that rate of recruitment, retention and success for rural and remote and Indigenous students is in top 3 nationally, especially in CSU's professional degrees.
- (ii) For national leadership in curriculum, learning and teaching in professional fields:
- Evidence of good demand (eg increasing applications; qualified applicants exceed quota; or UAI >80) and/or share of national enrolments above 10%;
 - Strong endorsement in professional accreditation (where relevant);
 - Graduate employment levels in the top 25% nationally;
 - Links to high quality research, creative and professional activity;
 - Evidence of national leadership in professional engagement, curriculum, learning and teaching, through roles in professional bodies; scholarship of learning and teaching;
 - At least 15% of load at p/g/RHD/Hons level with at least 5% at RHD/Honours level;

- ERA eligibility to take RHD students;
- International demand (where relevant).

4.2 General Performance

4.2.1 Subjects, Disciplines, Schools

All CSU disciplines and Schools should be expected to make substantial progress in learning and teaching against the following:

- Links with high quality research, creative and professional activity;
- Take up of the capabilities of CSU Interact to a specified level (to be determined);
- Adoption of CSU's standards in practice based learning (where relevant);
- Online teaching evaluation scores (target average of 5.5 or better);
- Proportion of p/g/RHD/Hons load (target at least 15%);
- ERA eligibility to take RHD students;
- Effective use of learning and teaching support services such as information literacy (DLS) and learning skills (DSS).

4.2.2 Courses

All CSU courses should be expected to make substantial progress in learning and teaching against the following:

- The curriculum standards of the CSU Degree Initiative;
- Improvements in SEQ scores and in CEQ (to be above comparable national average levels);
- First year retention above comparable national average levels;
- Graduate employment outcomes in top 25% nationally;
- Demand, including, where relevant, international demand. (Standard: qualified applicants exceed quota);
- Professional accreditation (where relevant).

5.0 Professional Engagement

High quality professional engagement is very important for teaching and learning and research at *a national university for the professions*. Professional engagement ensures that students engage with advanced knowledge and critical practice in the professions/industries/creative and performance arts. It enables CSU to support practice based research and evaluation. It provides opportunities for knowledge transfer and other forms of engagement and impact.

Professional disciplines and relevant Schools should have a profile which includes high quality professional activity alongside and integrated with high quality teaching and research or creative activities.

Professional disciplines and relevant Schools should show progress against the following:

- Quality and Impact of Research with, for and about the profession and about professional practice.
- Knowledge transfer /impact on policy/practice to members of the profession and the broader community.
- Grants and Consultancies to work with or for professions and professional bodies in policy and practice development, implementation and/or evaluation.
- Engagement in Professional/clinical practice that contributes to the currency and relevance of curriculum, teaching and learning, and quality graduate outcomes.
- Leadership of professional associations; accreditation authorities; conference organisation; advisory bodies; national or international delegations.

6.0 Support for Learning and Teaching, Research and Professional Engagement

Under the current *University Strategy* considerable attention has been given in the Divisions to service alignment, that is, ensuring the delivery of services aligned with core objectives and in an integrated manner. As CSU seeks to achieve the next steps under the *University Strategy*, Divisions will be expected to give priority to support CSU's standards in learning and teaching, research and professional engagement and to develop measures of contribution related to this.

The challenge for the Divisions will be to consolidate gains already made in relation to services and infrastructure while developing greater capacity to foster and support standards and to respond with agility to achieve improvement.

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Given the extent of change in factors contributing to students' overall experience of the University (e.g., "next generation learning spaces", "second-generation online teaching environments"), it will be important to develop shared understanding of the role of "enabling" Divisions in what are increasingly dynamic learning environments.

Given the changing expectations and technology-enabled collaborative possibilities for researchers, cooperation and consultation across Faculties and Divisions will be vital in areas such as e-research and open access environments.

Projects, initiatives and plans will need to be reviewed and possibly reprioritised against the standards in learning and teaching and research which CSU is seeking to achieve.

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