

Charles Sturt University Orientation Guidelines

CSU Vision for Orientation

CSU orientation will facilitate a smooth and successful transition to university study for commencing students. Orientation activities and resources will be available in a timely manner and will be accessible, relevant and accurate regardless of students' educational background, geographical location or study mode. CSU orientation will inspire students to fully engage with their learning experience and will address the mutual expectations and needs of students and the University in order for students to become successful and independent learners.

The Student Experience

CSU is committed to creating a seamless, integrated, student-centred experience by improving the quality of our students' engagement with the University regardless of who they are, where they are, or what stage they are in their relationship with CSU. An orientation process that supports a successful transition to university study is central to a quality student experience.

Learning transitions

All students regardless of their age, educational background, location or study mode experience a period of transition or adjustment when commencing study. Transition is commonly associated with school leavers commencing university on campus. However, the transition to postgraduate study, to a new discipline, or to a new study mode is just as important. Orientation programs and activities have an important role to play in ensuring these transitions are as smooth as possible. CSU recognises that the transition process is one which is mediated over time, and planning and delivery of orientation activities and strategies reflects this. The 'official' orientation period extends from the time of the letter of offer through until the end of the first session of study and includes strategies embedded within and outside the curriculum.

Students

In addition to students studying on campus, CSU is mindful of the diversity of our student cohorts including study mode, age, educational background and ethnicity. Through the orientation process, CSU seeks to acknowledge and support the particular needs of:

- Students studying by distance education
- Non school leavers
- Students commencing research degrees
- International students and exchange students
- Students studying through partner institutions
- Students with membership of recognised equity groups. e.g. Indigenous, low SES, students with a disability

Objectives of CSU orientation

The four main areas of transition that university students face are Academic, Administrative, Social and Geographic. The objective of CSU orientation is to assist students make these transitions successfully in order to support academic achievement, student development and student persistence and retention.

1. CSU Orientation will encourage and support academic achievement by:

- Explaining and clarifying academic culture and the expectations of academic study
- Promoting a clear understanding of the aims, objectives, learning and teaching approaches and assessment requirements for each course and how each subject links to the overall course and vocational path
- The intentional design of the first year curriculum to support students in transition
- Identifying academic skills necessary for success and providing support to develop these skills
- Encouraging the development of independent study habits and learner responsibility
- Providing opportunities for students to meet teaching staff in both formal and social settings including the virtual environment
- Providing opportunities and mechanisms for students to connect with peers in their cohort in order to better support their learning
- Highlighting the importance of student engagement with their learning experience and designing experiences to actively support and promote such engagement

2. CSU orientation will support student development by:

- Ensuring students understand their rights and responsibilities as a student (as per the student charter), and avenues for student representation
- Providing appropriate opportunities for participation in social, sporting and spiritual activities

- Modeling behaviour that encourages and promotes social and environmental responsibility and acknowledges cultural diversity
- Promoting the importance of engaging with the University and broader communities and highlighting opportunities and value of volunteer work, work experience and mentoring
- Providing an environment that promotes well-being, safety and inclusion
- Providing opportunities for peer support and mentoring

3. CSU Orientation will support student persistence and retention by:

- Avoiding 'information overload' by ensuring information provision is limited to what is immediately relevant and/or necessary and is conveyed in a way that is supportive and welcoming of students during their orientation
- Addressing any concerns or anxiety about course/career choice as early as possible
- Ensuring students are aware of the broad range of support services available to them at appropriate stages of the transition period and how to access them
- Promoting involvement in university life including engagement with peers and CSU staff particularly within the same course
- Familiarising students with their geographical and online environment
- Supporting social transition by providing appropriate activities
- Facilitating interactions with appropriate contact points within the administrative environment
- Identifying cohorts with particular needs, e.g. Indigenous, International, non school leaver and provide targeted activities, support and resources to address these needs
- Following up students who show signs of disengagement with support and referral to appropriate services
- Recognising the diversity of student skills and needs according to their different stages of life and/or study

CSU orientation good practice principles

1. **CSU values our students** –all our dealings with new students will demonstrate that they are welcome and valued by the entire University community, especially within their own Faculty.
2. **An ongoing process** – we recognize that every educational transition involves a period of adjustment and orientation is an important part of that transition. CSU treats orientation as a process, rather than a one off 'event'. Targeted orientation occurs between the letter of offer and the end of the first session of study.
3. **Shared responsibility** – the orientation of new students to CSU is a shared responsibility of all CSU staff and should be seen as a priority for all areas. Student transition will be explicitly supported through the intentional design of the first year curriculum as well as the timely and easy access to support services that aid academic, social and administrative orientation.
4. **Mutual understanding of responsibility** – our interactions and provision of advice and resources to new students will highlight the mutual responsibilities of both the University and its students, as well as the importance of self efficacy and responsibility, assisting students to become independent learners.
5. **Meaningful and appropriate experiences** – our orientation activities and resources will be relevant to students' future goals and will be evidence based. Orientation activities and processes will be continually monitored and enhanced by regular evaluation and student input into the development process.
6. **An integrated approach** – CSU will take a 'one university' approach to orientation and ensure that communication, activities and resources are delivered in a coherent, integrated and consistent manner.
7. **Effective delivery of information** - orientation information provided to students and their families will be accurate, relevant and accessible, creating realistic expectations. Direct communication to students will be timely and relevant and relate to issues of immediate importance within the orientation period.
8. **Student engagement** – orientation will assist all students to become part of the University community and encourage cohort engagement by providing opportunities for social and informal interaction between students, their peers and CSU staff in order to better support their learning
9. **Student diversity** – CSU orientation will recognise and value the diversity of cohorts and unique needs, and study modes of all students. Orientation will be inclusive of all students, regardless of course, study mode, accommodation arrangements or educational/personal/cultural background and will include specific tailored activities where appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities

Overarching governance

The Transition Steering Committee is responsible for the general oversight of orientation at CSU. The members of this committee are senior representatives of Faculties and Divisions across the University. The Director, Office of International Relations and Director, Marketing have right of audience and debate during Steering Committee meetings covering orientation issues. The Steering Committee will ensure a University-wide approach to orientation according to the CSU Orientation Guidelines. Faculties and Divisions will report to the Steering Committee each year to report on planned orientation activities in their area. The Transition Steering Committee is also responsible for the oversight of the University's online orientation strategy.

Faculty and Divisional responsibilities

Each **Division** is responsible for the development of their own orientation plans to ensure students are aware of the services and support they provide. This information should be consistent across the University, but take into account the needs of various cohorts with specific needs or circumstances, for example, students studying through Ontario or a CSU partner may require tailored information. Each area will provide details of their activities as requested for inclusion in University-wide information and web sites ensuring accuracy and relevance of all content. Each Faculty and Division will report to the Transition Steering Committee on orientation activity on an annual basis using a provided template. Division of Student services will coordinate the collection and dissemination of this information.

Student Associations, under the guidance of the Division of Student Services, are responsible for the organisation of social activities for students during the orientation period. It is expected that opportunities for social interaction will also be organized through faculty and Course based events.

Course Directors/Managers/Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the particular transition needs of students in their course are met through the orientation process and for providing necessary information to allow for required Faculty reporting. At a minimum, course-based orientation should:

- Provide an overview of the course
- Outline academic expectations for course in terms of time commitments, assessments, attendance
- Provide opportunity for students to clarify their expectations and ask questions
- Emphasise the availability of support services
- Provide opportunities for the development of student-student and student-staff relationships.

Course Directors/Managers/Coordinators are also responsible for ensuring that the first year curriculum actively supports student transition through the intentional design of the first year curriculum.

The **Division of Student Services** is responsible for the overall coordination of orientation activities including timetabling of activities, liaising between key stakeholders, dissemination of orientation

guidelines and the ongoing evaluation and reporting of orientation activities across the University ensuring equivalence of service, information and quality regardless of location.

Heads of Campus are responsible for the general oversight of on campus orientation activities and the organisation of a commencement ceremony in Session 1 each year. This ceremony should be a welcome to the University to new students and their families and should be a positive and motivating occasion that inspires students to strive for success and instills confidence in families that CSU has been the right choice. Academic gown should be worn for Commencement Ceremony and should include as much of the academic community as practical.

Student Central is the single point of contact for student queries during the orientation process. Faculties and Divisions should provide Student Central with copies of all information; timetables and resources provided to students and should be made aware of any special information requirements or advice to be provided to students. Faculties and Divisions must ensure that they address queries and/or issues escalated from Student Central to them in a timely fashion. This is especially important during the orientation period when students are at the greatest risk of withdrawing.

The **Student Communications Coordinator** is responsible for ensuring communication to students regarding orientation is appropriate in tone, timing, medium and content.

info.csu provides guidance to prospective student from initial inquiry through to enrolment and may receive queries from students regarding orientation. Faculties and Divisions should provide info.csu with copies of all information and timetables provided to students and should be made aware of any special information requirements or advice to be provided to students.

Operational guidelines

Key dates and activities The week immediately preceding Sessions 1 and 2 is known as 'O week' and is the period where activities on campus and online concentrate on the following issues:

- Ensuring enrolment is accurate and complete
- Making on campus and online tours available
- Providing activities to facilitate peer to peer /peer to staff engagement within courses
- Academic expectations are outlined
- Students are made aware of support services available – both physical and virtual

It is recognised that some courses utilise the international calendar and other variations. 'O Week' activities for these groups shall be aligned with relevant principal dates. While activities will be focused on specific dates aligning to the academic calendar, CSU is mindful that students may enroll before or after the official starting point of session. For this reason, transition based resources will be available online on an ongoing basis.

Online orientation

The CSU orientation web site is www.csu.edu.au/student/tba

All students will be directed to the orientation website from their offer letter. Faculties and Divisions should ensure that information provided on the online orientation site is accurate and current at all times.

On campus O week

- On campus O week will begin with a commencement ceremony and should be addressed by the most senior member of academic staff available
- Organisers should consult with the Division of Marketing to ensure appropriate use of CSU branding banners and other relevant materials and promotion
- O week should include a welcome to country, delivered by a local Elder where possible
- Where possible face to face delivered orientation sessions/lectures should be recorded/saved to the orientation site to be available for those who couldn't attend and to develop a repository of sustainable resources
- Sponsorship for O week from alcohol companies or hotels will not be accepted