5. Building an agile, responsive and efficient university operation

UQ is committed to ensuring that our operations and professional services are responsive to the needs of the University, built on a One UQ approach that drives service improvements and creates efficiencies – particularly in the student administration area. Streamlining and automating business processes, and building professional, advisory and technical skills in our workforce are key priorities.

For managers to have line of sight over the activities of UQ staff, the University released new policies, procedures, and disclosure tools in 2020 covering the following Conflicts of Interest; Secondary employment; Sensitive research; and Foreign influence. Consistent with UQ policy and State and Commonwealth legislative obligations, eligible staff are required to complete one or more of the 4 online tools. A high-level working group, chaired by the Provost, was also formed to manage the responses flowing from the disclosure processes. Feedback from other Universities in Australia indicates that UQ’s approach to these complex issues is now sector-leading.

Clinical trials management

This involved a review of resources and improvement of clinical trials management. This includes the provision of preclinical research training, guidance and best practice to those UQ researchers/clinicians conducting clinical trials, and aims to ensure that UQ can account accurately for all clinical trials in its purview and can monitor accordingly in order to meet all legislative requirements. During 2020, a website was established that provided resources for researchers, a Clinical Trials Risk Register was established, a register of approvals for human research studies (including clinical trials) was established, and a new Clinical Trials Procedure was drafted in consultation with a range of stakeholders and then published in December 2020.

Key performance indicators

Agile operations

Improved internal collaboration

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<tr>
<th>Proportion of staff who agree there is good communication across all sections of UQ</th>
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<td>2011</td>
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5.1 Proactively build the capacity and capability of our workforce to achieve our strategic goals.

Enhancing business processes and systems

During 2020, undergraduate program rules were extensively reviewed and realigned to the new Program Design policy, a key component of the Program Architecture Initiative. Operationally, a pilot for the centralisation of assessment of postgraduate coursework applications was implemented, further recommendations relating to the student disciplinary processes were implemented, and the Library adopted evidence-based methodologies to review processes and deliver improved services for students and greater strategic value from Library special collections.

A social experiment with a service robot was also trialled in conjunction with a Business, Economics and Law Doctor of Philosophy candidate.

Enhancing UQ policies and procedures

UQ continued the review of its policies and procedures in 2020 to ensure clarity of objectives, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. Processes were also implemented to ensure both new policies and procedures, and amendments to existing policies and procedures, have adequate regard to the principles for the protection of freedom of speech and academic freedom, and are compatible with human rights.

The major review of internal research policies and procedures continued in 2020, resulting in the trialled university documents in the domains of intellectual property, research management, human and animal ethics, and clinical trials. Work also began on a review of policies and procedures relating to open access, research data management, which will be finalised in 2021.

Disclosure and management of interests

In line with changing public expectations around the need for transparency and good governance, UQ developed a suite of new policies and tools to manage and align the interests of individual staff members to the good of the University as a whole.

Review of activities

4.6 Attract and develop a high-achieving cohort of students through enriched learning and personal development experiences.

UQ attracted 40.3 per cent of OP1–5 first preferences in 2020 and was first in the state for OP1–5. In 2019, UQ also retained 83.8 per cent of commencing domestic bachelors, the highest rate in Queensland.

Mobility and leadership opportunities

Despite the impacts of the pandemic, many mobility and leadership opportunities were provided to students, including:

- Student-Staff Partnerships
- Representation and Voice
- Mentoring programs such as Get Set, Virtual Village – UQ Mates and UQ Chats
- Peer writing mentor program
- Volunteering
- Student–Staff Partnership projects
- Summer in Queensland program leaders and volunteers
- Student Success Program
- Employability award
- Summer and Winter Research programs
- Careers workshops
- Virtual and domestic internships

Student advisory groups (for programs e.g. health promotion, international students, Student-Staff Partnerships, student employability)
- Student casual employment (safety stewards, student concierge, UQlife staff casuals – event staff, student engagement student casuals – marketing and communication, student and network, couch crew for UQ Life’s From the couch).

Ventures

At UQ, Ventures reflects the entrepreneurial spirit of our community, providing a suite of entrepreneurial programs, networking opportunities, 24/7 secure space, and mentoring to enable students to think and act like entrepreneurs – from idea generation through to market validation, and from launching a startup or social enterprise to scaling it up.

A key objective of the UQ Entrepreneurs Strategy is to embed entrepreneurial learning across all disciplines, and to continue deepening engagement with local and global partners.

Highlights for the year included the launch of the inaugural Ventures Industry Challenge, Virtual Hackathon and remote global Startup Adventures, as well as the iLab Accelerator program, which provides intensive support for entrepreneurs to grow a startup or social enterprise. To enhance student success, Ventures delivered all programs online, enabling participation of students during a space-based Early Recognition System to help students at risk of attrition. Retention rates improved from 82.88 per cent in 2015 to 83.83 per cent in 2019. Student withdrawal rates in 2020 were generally higher than in 2019. Withdrawals in Semester 2 in 2020 were 2.59 per cent of students withdrawing without academic penalty from all courses, compared to 1.01 per cent in Semester 2, 2019. It is likely that at least a portion of this increase can be attributed to the challenges faced by students as a result of the pandemic, coupled with an extended wait date to withdraw without academic penalty in recognition of this.

Student Success Program

In July 2020, immediately before Semester 2, UQ ran a 4-week Student Success Program to retain and support international students directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. New and returning international UQ students were provided with a suite of activities to prepare them for academic and employability success in 2020 and beyond. The program was split into 2 streams, with commencing students in the Academic stream, and returning students in the Employability stream. The program saw a total of 121 student registrants across both streams with 113 (35 per cent) attending in Semester 2 and 75 (41 per cent) comparing to 80 per cent or more of the employability activities.

Regional Medical Pathway

In 2020, UQ partnered with CQUniversity Australia, Whitsunday Hospital and Health Service, and Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service to investigate the delivery of a Regional Medical Pathway program. Talks continued throughout the year to launch the program that will see students complete a 5-year Bachelor of Medical Science (Pathway to Medicine) course with CQUniversity, before moving into UQ’s 4-year MD program. Planned to commence from Semester 1, 2022, students will complete both education programs locally in Bundaberg or Rockhampton, meaning aspiring doctors will no longer have to leave the region to complete their studies.

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Related initiatives for 4.5 pg 29

4.1 Indigenous engagement

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Improved internal collaboration

4. Related initiatives

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5.2 Enhance IT governance to ensure that UQ’s information technology aligns with the University’s strategy and priorities, appropriately considers risk and provides maximum value.

IT governance
The University has an IT Governance Framework that ensures that the IT function is optimised to support the University’s business objectives and risk appetite. The IT Governance Framework is aligned to support the University’s strategic priorities.

During 2020, the University’s IT governance was further matured by:
- developing a change management ‘heat map’ that looks at the level of change being placed on the University through IT initiatives;
- improving the capture and oversight of benefits realisation for IT investments;
- developing a roadmap for software compliance improvements;
- strengthening disaster recovery and business continuity for key systems;
- developing a design authority framework and technical leadership framework that will guide how the University will design and implement new systems;
- drafting the IT procurement framework that will enable efficient and effective procurement of a key procurement category for the University;
- releasing a new agile approach for the University to undertake significant consultation to provide a sound approach for the University’s virtual environment over the next 3 years;
- drafting a cyber security strategy that will guide how UQ will protect itself against cyber security risks;
- releasing new IT standards that target effective operations and risk reduction.

IT Capital Investment Plan
During 2020, work was undertaken to identify a suite of projects to maintain and enhance the University’s information and communication technology infrastructure. Priority was given to projects that support the Student Strategy, research and cyber security, with delivery scheduled for 2021. This initiative will also cover network upgrades (including 100Gbps network to Gatton) and continued business process digitisation.

5.3 Simplify, streamline, standardise and automate administrative process and work flows across the University.

Accounts payable and accounts receivable automation (APARA)
The APARA project’s primary objective is to centralise, standardise, streamline and automate Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable processes at UQ. During 2020, work on this project focused on completing the automation of the invoice processing within accounts payable, with an end-of-year target for at least 75 per cent of UQ supplier invoices auto-validated and paid.

Contract and grants financial management
During 2020, UQ Finance focused its attention on automating and streamlining existing processes, including investigating supply chains, producing regular financial reports, and enhancing management reporting to aid decision-making.

HR transformation
Human Resources is currently redesigning how it supports UQ, with the aim of making it easier to find HR information online, and to find the right person to talk to at the right time. During 2020, Workday was selected as the new Human Capital Management Solution. Analysis of business processes, system functionality and integration with other systems commenced, but implementation of the system was delayed due to the pandemic. This system will replace manual or paper-based activities with simplified and automated workflows for quicker and more consistent service delivery. Other expected benefits include:
- simplified business processing and authorisations; reduced manual processes with minimal duplication;
- an easily accessible, improved user interface; and a comprehensive, single and accurate view of employees;
- high-quality, trusted data supplied in real time;
- support for a high-performance culture and future growth, promoting a diverse culture and enabling employees to take control of their career pathways through consistency of recruitment, onboarding and staff development, and direct access for individuals and leaders to the right information to perform in their role.

Research Management Business Transformation program
The Research Management Business Transformation (RBMT) Program encompasses a broad range of targeted projects designed to streamline, enhance and support research, researchers and research training through the provision of new digital solutions.

A 2-phase review of the program was completed during 2020. The Higher Degrees by Research Enhancement project saw a staged rollout of features commencing in late 2020, while the Research Infrastructure Management System was also implemented in the first round of facilities. Research Data Manager is now fully integrated, and incorporates the Digital Research Notebooks functionality.

5.4 Review our delivery model for student services and administration to maximise effectiveness and efficiency and enhance the student experience.

Student administration – digitisation and automation
The student administration digitisation and automation stream of work continued to make progress in enhancing business processes for students. By December 2020, the Business Enhancement team had delivered 19 digitised UniTask forms (some with multiple versions) and 16 significant system enhancements. More than 14,000 student requests have been successfully processed to date, with 77,000 in 2020.

The team also led the development of multiple Robotics Process Automation (RPA) solutions which have achieved estimated savings of 70 person-days in 2020 alone. These included multiple activities in response to COVID-19, such as mass enrolment and grade changes, as well as bulk change updates to student system configuration, and an integration which allows for full automation of the majority of transcript requests past and current students. The team is working towards an automation solution to facilitate the tracking and administration around the Academic Modulature system.

HR transformation
UQ Finance focused its attention on automating and streamlining existing processes, including investigating supply chains, producing regular financial reports, and enhancing management reporting to aid decision-making.

Supporting students facing hardship
With lockdowns applied across the state because of the pandemic, many students – particularly international – lost both social contact and part-time employment, and found themselves facing severe economic and personal hardship. In an effort to alleviate this, UQ students and staff made more than 24,000 ‘care calls’ to affected students; and UQ staff, students and volunteers distributed 28,000 meals. The UQ and State Government Emergency Support Fund paid out more than $1 million in grants to more than 600 students.