

University of Southern Queensland

STRATEGIC PLAN 2009 – 2013

*Creating sustainable futures ...
Embracing the digital education revolution*





MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

This Strategic Plan has been developed on the threshold of expected significant changes for the Higher Education sector in Australia which are anticipated to flow from the Bradley Review, commissioned by the Commonwealth Government as part of its preparation for reform to the higher education sector in Australia. These anticipated changes in the Australian scene run in parallel with the continuing development of international education as a significant service in both economic and developmental terms.

The intrinsic strengths of USQ are built on an academic and organisational model significantly different from many other Australian universities. Progressing from its foundations as a distance education provider, the University has diversified its operations to include a far greater mix of open and flexible programs that meet the education needs of its students. The ways new technologies are being used to reflect the generational demands of student groups has required the University to consider new teaching approaches to reach the vast majority of its enrolled students who undertake their studies via different modes of learning.

Matched also with a growing international presence and the challenges from foreign and Australian universities and off-shore compliance demands by overseas' governments, the University's Strategic Plan is cognisant of the fluidity of these markets and the volatility of global economies. As such USQ is placing considerable emphasis on the benefits of attracting overseas students onto its Toowoomba, Springfield and Fraser Coast campuses to increase efficiencies and improve on the delivery of its programs to them.

In order to meet the demands of the economic, social and environmental needs of its regions the University of Southern Queensland's three campuses play an important role in their respective communities. The significant resource and energy developments occurring to the west of Toowoomba are predicted to have a considerable impact on the sustainability of South West Queensland and will undoubtedly have a flow-on effect for USQ's Toowoomba campus. Meanwhile, the position of Springfield as one of Queensland's population growth corridor areas augers well for USQ's presence there. The Springfield campus is ideally located within Education City and in close proximity to the development of Health City which will accommodate medical and allied health providers. Newly completed teaching facilities at Fraser Coast campus demonstrate the confidence USQ has in the progressive and dynamic growth of this region.

The USQ Strategic Plan is underpinned by an extensive consultation undertaken in its preparation and my appreciation is extended to those who have contributed to its development. The document is divided into two parts. Part I comprises *The University Strategy* that includes USQ's Mission, Vision and Values while Part II lists Corporate Objectives under each of nine Goal Areas. The Plan provides for moderate growth and the enhancement of quality and performance in our core business activities of learning and teaching, research and engagement.



Professor Bill Lovegrove
Vice Chancellor and President





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PART I:
THE UNIVERSITY STRATEGY



USQ VISION

To be recognised as a world leader in open and flexible higher education.

USQ MISSION

To enable broad participation in higher education and to make significant contributions to research and community development.

This will be achieved through maintaining USQ as a viable enterprise that:

- offers quality professional education opportunities that are accessible, flexible and borderless;
- creates fulfilling experiences for all students based on the commitment of skilled and caring staff;
- develops graduates who are positioned to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world;
- pursues world-class research, innovation and practice in sustainable futures; and
- engages with communities, business and government through ongoing and mutually beneficial partnerships.

USQ CORE VALUES

Respect for the individual

Success for students

Social responsibility

Free intellectual inquiry

Excellence, innovation and creativity.

USQ PRINCIPAL COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION

Supporting Australia as a socially inclusive society, building Australia's skills base and progressing regional, national and global sustainability.

USQ COMPETITIVE BUSINESS ADVANTAGE

Providing the highest quality educational experiences to students irrespective of their location or lifestyle.

USQ BRAND PROMISE

Fulfilling lives

KEY ORGANISATIONAL GOALS

LEARNING AND TEACHING	To enhance teaching performance and to provide high quality, flexible and inclusive learning experiences that promote lifelong learning, critical enquiry and students' career opportunities
STUDENTS	To create fulfilling learning experiences that are focused on student objectives
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS	To be recognised as a national leader in the provision of vibrant and contemporary programs responsive to the professions
RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING	To be acknowledged leaders in applied research and research training, with a particular emphasis on research in sustainable futures
STAFF	To attract and retain excellent staff who exemplify USQ's values and provide them with opportunities to succeed personally, professionally and organisationally
EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	To maintain a profile of domestic and international educational partnerships that enhances USQ's position as a successful and leading higher education provider
SOCIAL JUSTICE, EQUITY AND INCLUSION	To broaden equitable participation by students and staff and to encourage the development of a University culture that values diversity, multiculturalism and social inclusiveness
ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT	To derive mutual benefits for the University and its external stakeholders through engagement and development
ENTERPRISE	To deliver positive social, environmental and economic dividends

KEY ORGANISATIONAL THEMES

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) is a major public institution with obligations to serve its regions, its State and its nation; an academic institution committed to free intellectual inquiry and scholarship; and a large transnational business enterprise competing in a global marketplace.

Two principal themes provide a major influence on what USQ is and what it stands for as a university, thus forming the basis for a distinctive USQ identity. These themes are:

- **open and flexible education**; encompassing education that is 'open' in terms of it being broadly accessible, and 'flexible' in terms of its ability to cater to the needs of a diverse student constituency in a wide variety of geographical locations—creating a platform for the USQ Brand promise: "Fulfilling lives"; and
- **sustainability**; by placing an emphasis on activities that support sustainable futures for communities and regions locally, nationally and globally, and by USQ itself operating as a socially responsible organisation.

In pursuing its Mission and Goals, USQ will build on its long-standing leadership and expertise in distance and digital education, and will place an emphasis on open and flexible education and sustainability as major themes informing all areas of activity—with the aim of creating improved futures through technological innovation and excellence in practice.

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PART II:
CORPORATE OBJECTIVES UNDER EACH GOAL AREA

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES FOR 2009

A range of objectives are listed below under each Goal Area. From these, five have been selected as Priority Corporate Objectives for 2009. These priorities will be reviewed each year of the Strategic Plan and will be updated in line with performance and outcomes.

Maintaining leadership in learning and teaching. *USQ has a long tradition of excellence in learning and teaching, as recognised through numerous prestigious national and international awards. Maintaining this leadership position in a competitive and dynamic higher education environment requires USQ to not rest on its laurels but rather to continually strive for innovation and quality improvement.*

Learning and Teaching Priority Objective

A Sustainable quality improvement of teaching performance

Enhancing the Student Learning Journey. *USQ has been extremely successful in providing a supportive and nurturing environment for students that promotes success. Increasing life and study pressures on students require USQ to develop ever improving strategies for optimising success for its increasingly diverse student constituency.*

Students Priority Objectives

B Enhancement of student retention and satisfaction with the Student Learning Journey

C Consolidation and improvement of USQ's market position

Ensuring a strong and sustainable research program. *The operating environment for research in Australian universities is changing dramatically. Strong research and research training programs enrich the academic culture of the University and positions it to better serve its regions and its nation.*

Research and Research Training Priority Objective

D A reputation for quality Applied Research as a basis to attract a greater share of external funding

Acknowledging staff as the University's greatest asset. *USQ's most valuable resource is its staff and policies and practices must support, nurture and develop staff in the vital roles that they play across the organisation.*

Staff Priority Objective

E A productive, motivated and highly engaged workforce committed to the success of USQ

GOAL 1: LEARNING AND TEACHING

To enhance teaching performance and to provide high quality, flexible and inclusive learning experiences that promote lifelong learning, critical enquiry and students' career opportunities

Learning and Teaching is USQ's core business and the University has a long-established reputation as a leader in open and flexible education.

The University's approach to learning and teaching is based on active student engagement in learning and the provision of a wide variety of flexible learning opportunities and assessment. It has built a strong culture of learning and teaching centred on excellence and innovation.

USQ has developed relevant and adaptive curricula that facilitates active intellectual engagement and provides a flexible, responsive, supportive and inclusive learning environment. Sustainable outcomes in learning and teaching are ensured through the application of university-wide quality enhancement processes and a range of coordinated strategies to maintain high standards in teaching, learning, learning resources and curricula.

USQ specialises in widening access to tertiary education through flexible learning opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds and lifestyles, and its development of fleximode policies and procedures ensure that the University will continue to respond to students' learning needs, regardless of location.

Learning and Teaching Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1: Sustainable quality improvement of USQ curricula
- OBJECTIVE 2: Sustainable quality improvement of teaching performance (Priority Objective A)
- OBJECTIVE 3: Enhanced students' academic skills
- OBJECTIVE 4: Enhanced position in open and flexible education
- OBJECTIVE 5: Enhanced learning and teaching management and policy framework at USQ



GOAL 2: STUDENTS

To create fulfilling learning experiences that are focused on student objectives

USQ has built its Brand Promise on a longstanding tradition and strong culture of caring for and supporting students. However, changes in the circumstances of students and the University's operating environment require USQ to continue to innovate and adapt to meet student needs.

Growing financial and time pressures on students are affecting student enrolment behaviours. This creates real challenges for USQ which has a high proportion of students studying part-time while employed, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students who are the first in their family to attend university.

Pressures on USQ are also created by the increasingly deregulated and competitive nature of the higher education market. USQ's market advantage is based on providing quality education to all of its students regardless of their physical location and individual circumstances. The challenge for the University is to remain flexible and responsive in order to continue to provide high quality student experiences in a changing world.

A consolidation of USQ's student management capability into a single organisational Division under a dedicated Pro Vice-Chancellor position provides USQ with a sound basis for maintaining the highest standards in supporting the learning journey of all its students.

Students Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1:** Enhancement of student retention and satisfaction with the Student Learning Journey (**Priority Objective B**)
- OBJECTIVE 2:** Consolidation and improvement of USQ's market position (**Priority Objective C**)
- OBJECTIVE 3:** The relationship management approach embedded into all academic and non-academic areas across the University



GOAL 3: ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

To be recognised as a national leader in the provision of vibrant and contemporary programs responsive to the professions

USQ has a long tradition of providing work-ready professional graduates. By providing access to a diverse and vibrant suite of academic programs, the University makes a major contribution to the building of Australia's social capital.

The University has in place a suite of strong and defensible programs and has broadened its offerings in strategic areas such as Law and Wine Tourism, and continued to innovate through programs such as the work-based Masters and Doctorate of Professional Studies. USQ will continue to work with industry and the professions to ensure that its programs are relevant and current and that they prepare students for discipline expertise, professionalism, global citizenship, scholarship and lifelong learning.

Open and flexible education represents an important strategy for skilling and upskilling the workforce. USQ is well placed through its leadership in this area to address recognised skills needs in the workforce and to assist in regional development.

Major steps are being taken to improve the regular assessment of the performance of academic programs within a comprehensive Academic Quality Framework. A major review of Academic Board has also provided an opportunity for streamlining accreditation and other key processes affecting the academic program portfolio.

Academic Programs Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1:** A vibrant suite of academic programs for USQ that are attractive to students, responsive to the professions, relevant to its charter, and economically viable
- OBJECTIVE 2:** A high standard of Academic Quality across the portfolio of programs



GOAL 4: RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING

To be acknowledged leaders in applied research and research training, with a particular emphasis on research in sustainable futures

Research and Research Training are central to USQ's activities as an Australian university and provide the basis for major contributions by the University to its local regions.

The University has established a select number of multidisciplinary research centres that build on institutional strengths, place an emphasis on applied research in areas of high relevance to communities and regions, and position USQ to enter into strong partnerships with like-minded universities both in Australia and overseas.

The USQ Research Framework under development sees the identification of four core themes on which the University will build its profile through the development of strategic alliances. These are: the Sustainable Systems Initiative, Sustainable Communities, Technology Innovation and the Learning Futures Initiative which includes developing the digital capacity at USQ through the Australian Digital Futures Institute (ADFI).

Research and Research Training Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1:** USQ positioned to meet the challenges presented by a changing higher education landscape in Australia
- OBJECTIVE 2:** A reputation for quality Applied Research as a basis to attract a greater share of external funding (Priority Objective D)
- OBJECTIVE 3:** Centres of research excellence which, in their respective fields of endeavour, are regarded as the equal of any in the sector
- OBJECTIVE 4:** Enhanced major collaborations with external research agencies and a significant profile in sustainability
- OBJECTIVE 5:** A vibrant research culture at USQ and the embedding of an appreciation of the importance and value of research to the health and success of the institution



GOAL 5: STAFF

To attract and retain excellent staff who exemplify USQ's values and provide them with opportunities to succeed personally, professionally and organisationally

Staff represent USQ's most valuable and valued asset.

Demographic and population changes over the next decade, changes in work practices and the way the workplace operates, and the implications of an aging workforce create important challenges for the University. Significant rationalisation and re-profiling have already been undertaken to position USQ to meet these challenges.

Optimising staff recruitment and retention strategies, the effective deployment of reward and recognition systems, ensuring a safe and productive workplace, supporting life/work balance through flexible work arrangements, career development and effective leadership and management training are all important factors supporting the maintenance of a strong staff profile.

USQ has successfully improved its academic staff profile in terms of both formal teaching qualifications and research doctorates as a basis for progressing both its learning and teaching and research aspirations. Achieving equitable participation for women at senior levels is a major aim for the University—refer to Goal 7.

Staff Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1:** Best practice employee attraction, retention and engagement to achieve a workforce aligned with USQ's strategic objectives
- OBJECTIVE 2:** A productive, motivated and highly engaged workforce committed to the success of USQ (**Priority Objective E**)
- OBJECTIVE 3:** A workplace which recognises, rewards and develops personal, professional and organisational effort and success so that USQ is an employer of choice



GOAL 6: EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

To maintain a profile of domestic and international educational partnerships that enhances USQ's position as a successful and leading higher education provider

Over one-fifth of USQ's student load is derived from international students studying with one of USQ's partners. This highlights the importance of educational partnerships to USQ's economic well-being and the degree to which educational partnerships contribute to the student culture of the University.

USQ has a strategic approach to educational partnerships. An emphasis is given to securing partnerships that are consistent with the University's Vision, that build on the University's formidable capability for open and flexible education, that support high quality educational outcomes for students, that are financially sound and that bring a range of positive tangible benefits to the University.

While USQ has built a strong portfolio of educational partnerships with off-shore private and publicly listed businesses, the University's focus is now broadening to include educational partnerships with overseas universities and with local partners that enhance corporate education opportunities.

USQ is also exploring a broader range of academic engagement models to take greater advantage of the strengths of its educational partners and to broaden the scope of its partnerships portfolio.

Educational Partnerships Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1:** An Educational Partnerships Portfolio that enhances USQ's reputation based on financial sustainability, high academic and business integrity and sound student outcomes
- OBJECTIVE 2:** USQ's international Partners to include a number of strategically appropriate and academically enhancing overseas universities in the Asia-Pacific region
- OBJECTIVE 3:** A competitively complementary and manageable suite of high quality domestic Partners



GOAL 7: SOCIAL JUSTICE, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

To broaden equitable participation by students and staff and to encourage the development of a University culture that values diversity, multiculturalism and social inclusiveness

USQ has a strong explicit commitment to supporting the development of Australia as a socially inclusive society. It provides accessible and equitable educational pathways and supportive learning environments for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, an inclusive and fair work environment for staff, and is recognised as a strong supporter of multiculturalism.

The University is one of the few in the sector that is over-represented for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged and regional backgrounds, and has a strong portfolio of equity programs in place. USQ students in identified disadvantaged groups generally perform above the national average for access, participation, retention and success. There are particular areas of need, however, which have been targeted for attention. These include improving participation by Indigenous Australians and students with disability, and improving educational outcomes for students from refugee backgrounds and offenders in custody. Each presents unique challenges.

Staff equity is also an important area for USQ. Increasing employment participation for Indigenous Australians and people with disability are important issues for the University. The continued under-representation of females in senior academic and administrative positions is the target of concerted policy and action.

Social Justice, Equity and Inclusion Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1: Enhanced reputation for USQ in the provision of socially inclusive education
- OBJECTIVE 2: Equity embedded into all aspects of operations and practice at USQ
- OBJECTIVE 3: Improved access, transition and support for groups from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds
- OBJECTIVE 4: An equitable and diverse staff profile



GOAL 8: ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

To derive mutual benefits for the University and its external stakeholders through engagement and development

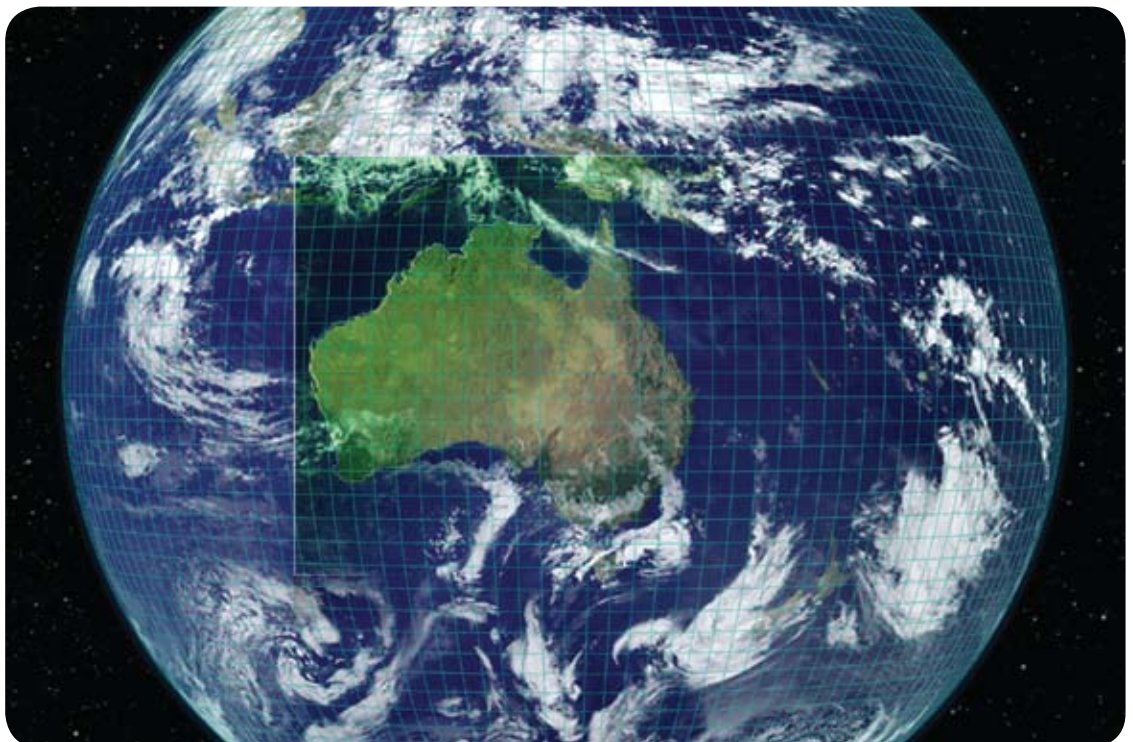
Throughout its development, USQ has benefited from a close association with its local communities. Its status as an engaged university has provided a cutting edge to USQ's learning and teaching programs, fuelled the conduct of research that has directly benefited local communities and helped ensure that the University has remained relevant and in-touch with its broad stakeholder base.

USQ introduced improved strategies to coordinate and drive its interests in this area and to embed a more holistic approach to Engagement and Development. There has also been considerable activity in reviewing policy, processes, systems and structures to ensure they support external endeavour. This has resulted in faster decision making, better risk and governance systems, and a greater level of cultural alignment with partners.

USQ will continue to build its Community Engagement Framework, particularly in terms of building a sustainable portfolio of mutually beneficial long-term partnerships with the community, developing a more consistent approach to Government liaison, optimising the structures supporting Engagement and Development, and establishing a comprehensive University strategy for fund raising and private source income.

Engagement and Development Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1:** USQ positioned as a knowledge influence in the regions in which it operates
- OBJECTIVE 2:** Increased income for USQ through Engagement and Development activities
- OBJECTIVE 3:** Engaged communities as a basis for promoting a life long learning association with an increasing number of stakeholders



GOAL 9: ENTERPRISE

To deliver positive social, environmental and economic dividends

The operating environment for higher education has become increasingly deregulated and competitive over the past decade. The optimisation of efficiency, effectiveness and capacity building has become major issues underpinning institutional financial sustainability.

Increased competitiveness in an increasingly deregulated higher education market has obliged universities to diversify their income sources and streamline their operations. USQ has not been immune from these trends. Importantly, USQ has several major strengths that it can build on, including committed staff, a size that lends itself to flexibility in business operations across multiple campuses, a clarity of vision, a strong unique identity and a capacity for operational excellence

Over recent years policy frameworks have been strengthened and processes have been streamlined to minimise administrative costs without compromising capacity. Considerable effort has been put into enhancing the University's decision support and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) infrastructures. The overall aim for financial planning is to produce healthy surpluses that can be reinvested into the core business as a basis for sustainable development.

In line with USQ's commitment to progressing regional, national and global sustainability, the University is seeking to position itself as a carbon neutral operation across all three campuses within the next decade.

Enterprise Objectives

- OBJECTIVE 1:** Quality corporate services that improve USQ's overall performance and contribute to sustainable development
- OBJECTIVE 2:** Comprehensive information to support business decision making
- OBJECTIVE 3:** A carbon neutral operation across all three campuses by 2020



A more detailed version of this Plan is available upon request.

For contact details refer to the Planning & Quality Office Homepage at: <http://www.usq.edu.au/planstats/index.htm>

