

# USQ Flexible Learning

## Executive Summary

With a reduced scope from its original extensive task, this document focuses on identifying some preliminary steps in “mainstreaming” flexible learning at USQ. A particular task within this has been to propose an approach to the management of flexible delivery. The proposed policy is presented in Appendix A.

The focus of the document has been on presenting the key issues relating to flexible learning at USQ identified in a preliminary and informal analysis are presented and then initial recommendations to address those issues. In the other parts of the document, relevant aspects of these issues and recommendations are briefly discussed. In particular, the working definition of flexible learning and related terms such as flexible delivery are given and, with respect to measuring and monitoring, some starting points are outlined.

The key contribution of this document is the recommendations, which are:

Recommendation 1: A stand-alone charter be developed that outlines what USQ means by “flexible learning” and provides guidelines for good practice

Recommendation 1a: The proposed flexible delivery “fleximode” policy and associated processes should be introduced within the context of that charter.

Recommendation 2: All reviews of policies and procedures should include, where relevant, consideration of appropriate aspects of flexible learning.

Recommendation 2a: Given its other strategic theme of sustainability, USQ should comprehensively review its [access and distribution of learning resources model specifically the use of printing](#) as a means of delivery.

Recommendation 3: A range of processes be developed to measure various aspects of flexible learning. The following are initial suggestions.

Recommendation 3a: A core set of indicators be developed to measure the uptake by staff and impact on students and staff of flexible learning, or specific characteristic of it, such as flexible delivery. These indicators should be used where possible in current evaluation processes such as quality and satisfaction evaluations.

Recommendation 3b: A flexible learning program checklist be developed to ascertain what features of flexible learning may be incorporated in a program *at program level*. The checklist can be used when a program is introduced, reaccredited or reviewed (as part of the academic quality review).

Recommendation 3c: Using the flexible delivery tool set framework, an audit process be developed so that a flexible delivery baseline can be determined and then uptake (and engagement) rate against that baseline measured.

Recommendation 4: Engagement and innovation with respect to flexible learning should be a factor within the academic staff HR process e.g. induction, workload allocation and promotion.

Recommendation 4a: The learning and teaching awards system should include specific opportunities to encourage and reward flexible learning initiatives.

Recommendation 4b: Workload allocation for course development should require that the development be done within the USQ flexidelivery structure. Exceptions to this would need formal approval.

Recommendation 4c: Effective engagement with relevant aspects of flexible learning should be a measure within the BUILD process for academic staff.

Recommendation 5: That the University review and where necessary revise the mechanisms for planning flexible learning initiatives at all levels in order to ensure that they are done in a strategic, coordinated way, with due consideration of resources and benefits.

Recommendation 6: In conjunction with the review covered in recommendation 5, the adequacy of resources and skills development opportunities be reviewed and any deficiencies addressed.

Recommendation 7: A systematic approach should be developed to estimate and analyse the resource and skills needs of any proposed (significant) initiatives in flexible learning. Where warranted this should extend to a cost benefit analysis.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This document is concerned with flexible learning at USQ. The primary task that instigated this document was to identify how to integrate, “mainstream”, flexible learning into the educational culture and practice of USQ. Consequently this document is not directly concerned with the strong leading edge (‘digital futures’) aspect of flexible learning at USQ aside from acknowledging that the its outcomes can influence the overall flexible learning agenda at USQ and therefore should be part of any considerations.

*Because the identified task has proved to be very substantial, the scope of this document has been reduced to identifying some preliminary steps in “mainstreaming” flexible learning at USQ. A particular task within this has been to propose an approach to the management of flexible delivery. The proposed policy is presented in Appendix B – in this document the policy is referred to as the flexidelivery policy in order to differentiate it from the various draft fleximode policies that have been in circulation of which it is a significantly modified version. This version of the policy links flexible delivery with teaching models, the process for evolving the flexible delivery tool-kit within a flexible delivery framework and resources including workload allocations.*

The underlying premise of this document is that at a “premier open and flexible university”, the strategic priorities and operational practices of the University as a whole as well as those of its units must be explicitly supportive of and linked to flexible learning.

This document is structured using the ADRI (analysis-deployment-results/review-improve) framework. In the analysis section, relevant issues are identified. The working definition of “flexible learning” and related terms is presented along with a framework for classifying engagement with flexible learning (or a sub-activity of it such as flexible delivery). Building on the outcomes of this analysis, the deployment section recommends steps to initiate the mainstreaming of flexible learning at USQ. In the results/review sections, the means of both monitoring and measuring the success of that mainstreaming, as well as maintaining it, are outlined. Finally, in the improvement section, the possible means by which the outcomes of measuring and monitoring feed back into the policy and procedures are outlined as well as how the mainstreaming may be further developed. Since this document is not intended to be a project plan, the results and improvement sections are brief and focussed on key points flowing from the analysis and deployment sections. With reference to the key deployment recommendations, a proposal as to the short term set of actions needed to initiate deployment and some longer term activities that continue that into the future are outlined in Appendix A.

As the use of the ADRI framework suggests, this document proposes an ongoing evolution of flexible learning at USQ. This is appropriate not just for standard quality improvement but because the technology and teaching approaches that underpin flexible learning continue to evolve. For instance a major source of change currently is development with respect to “social e-learning”. Consequently, this document itself does not prescribe particular technologies but as already mentioned, the flexidelivery policy does propose formalizing the process by which the applicable technology “tool kit” can be identified and modified. Appendix B includes an initial flexible delivery policy that outlines this process and, Appendix C outlines a toolkit framework.

## 2.0 Analysis

In Section 2.1 the key issues relating to flexible learning at USQ identified in a preliminary and informal analysis are presented. One of the issues identified to a disparity in the use of relevant terms. Section 2.2 explains the terms used throughout this document.

### 2.1 Key issues

USQ aspires to a sustainable position as a leader in the provision of flexible learning. There continues to be an active minority strongly and successfully engaged with technology-enhanced teaching and

learning both with respect to development and scholarship. However with respect to the comprehensive and coherent organisation-wide educational processes there appears to be a number of issues. The following is intended to be a summary of the key issues.

- a) It is very difficult to ascertain clearly what flexible learning means at USQ.
- b) There appears to be a significant mismatch between the macro (strategy, policy, ‘university-level’ projects) and the micro (actual teaching practice, iterative change, individual adaptation) levels with respect to engagement with flexible learning.
- c) Engagement with and effectiveness of flexible learning is not systematically measured at USQ; consequently it is difficult to ascertain formally the level of engagement and to determine the impact of activities such as the range of activities mentioned under issue f.
- d) Flexible learning does not appear to be mainstreamed at USQ. Beyond that needed for “distance education”, it appears to be perceived to be a voluntary or optional activity.
- e) The engagement with and embedding of flexible delivery in on-campus teaching appears to be significantly variable and generally on the low side.
- f) Flexible delivery for distance education appears to be also limited in many cases bearing in mind that non-face-to-face (or single modal) delivery is not of itself flexible delivery.
- g) Despite the previous points, there are flexible learning initiatives and activities in both on-campus and distance education across USQ. However they are not occurring within a systematic framework – this limits quality control, efficiencies, recognition and sharing of good practices as well as lessons learned. There is a wide range of activities within university level operational projects around some aspect of the implementation of flexible learning, particularly flexible delivery, but it appears to be very technology-focussed. The dispersed nature of these activities dilutes the capacity to properly engage with flexible learning. The technology-focus of these activities weakens the link with teaching models and practices that encourages broader engagement.
- h) There appear to be issues, or at least perceptions of issues, with the adequacy of infrastructure, tool sets and staff engagement and skills

## 2.2 Definitions

As mentioned above, there does appear to be some confusion about the nature and status of flexible learning and related activities. (This is not a phenomenon unique to USQ.) This section briefly outlines the key references within the USQ web-site and then proceeds to present the definitions used

In the preamble of University Calender Section 7.5, Policy on Learning and Teaching, USQ identifies itself as a “a modern flexible university”. In the same policy, under guiding principles for learning and teaching activities, the third principle refers to flexibility with the first and third point relating to flexible learning, the former in relation to flexible delivery and the later, flexible learning in its broader sense.

### ***“5.3 A Flexible and Responsive Environment***

*The University aims to create and maintain a learning environment that*

*5.3.1 offers choice in modes of educational delivery to its students*

*5.3.2 offers educational opportunities through a range of entry and exit pathways*

*5.3.3 incorporates a range of teaching and learning strategies to accommodate the diverse needs of students*

*5.3.4 offers a diversity of educational experiences.”*

(<http://www.usq.edu.au/resources/75.pdf>)

Thereafter there appears to be no other mention of flexible learning within the Calendar. The next main reference occurs within the Learning and teaching action kit:

*“Flexible learning means that all students have the right to receive a comparable learning experience regardless of their mode of study, location, gender, race or ethnicity. However, flexible learning can also present the possibility of offering students choices in what to learn, how to learn, how their learning is assessed and where and when the learning occurs.”*

[http://www.usq.edu.au/extrafiles/ltsu/LTActionKit/study\\_modules/FlexibleLearning.htm](http://www.usq.edu.au/extrafiles/ltsu/LTActionKit/study_modules/FlexibleLearning.htm)

While the equity and equality “openness” principle espoused in the first sentence of this definition is valid and valuable, it is an unusual definition of flexible learning. Flexible learning is commonly defined as described within the second sentence, noting that the choices are normally constrained by appropriateness and resources. (This possibility contributes to the feasibility of implementing the “openness” principle.)

Echoing this, the definition used here, is flexible learning is *education that is focussed on using theory, pedagogy, practice and tools to provide learning options that are better aligned with the learning needs of students*. As far as possible, flexible learning supports student choices in what, when, how and where they study, as well as supporting the different learning styles of students. Technical advances underpin the teaching innovations and developments that are necessary to support flexible learning effectively, efficiently and viably. However, the consensus in the literature and practice, is that the prime contributor to successful flexible learning is staff and students who are engaged and enthusiastic, appropriately skills and adequately supported.

It is generally recognised that a comprehensive flexible learning approach needs to be developed at the program level. This is because factors, such as the requirements of the discipline(s), program structure, course sequencing and prerequisite structure, and program requirements, such as accreditation, all impact significantly on what teaching and learning approaches can be made available. For instance, a program may be made up of theory-only and practical courses in such a way that any mandatory on-campus requirements are minimised to give greater flexibility to students in how they study the remainder of the program. While “flexible learning” assumes that all learning and teaching options are considered, it does not presume that any particular ones have to be made available, nor that some are preferable to others.

“Flexible delivery” is often mistakenly treated as “flexible learning” but the former is actually a critical (though not exclusive) component in the achievement of the later. “Technology-enhanced learning and teaching” is perceived to significantly overlap with “flexible delivery”. Flexible delivery is focussed *specifically on the use of technologies to develop and deliver, as well as store and retrieve, content in a multi-modal manner*. As the technologies have evolved, flexible delivery has grown also to include the use of these technologies to provide for a variety of communication and interaction modes.

*“In one sense, there is a continuum between these terms, online is a subset of e-learning and e-learning is a subset of flexible learning. However, there is also a distinction between technology and approach. Online and e-learning are about specific technologies. Flexible learning is a philosophy and an approach, of which the use of technology is one, albeit very important, component.”* Australian Flexible Learning Framework, <http://pre2005.flexiblelearning.net.au/guide/index.htm>

Because, as mentioned earlier, flexible delivery is an important component of achieving flexible learning, flexible learning is often confused with e-learning, on-line, technology-enhanced and distance learning because the technologies have been harnessed initially for distance education. The difference between flexible delivery and distance education has been identified at the macro level through the introduction at USQ of fleximode.

*“USQ now uses the concept of fleximode, to articulate its aim of extending the learning and teaching practices and online resources, traditionally applied in distance mode only, to all students. This adoption of fleximode now includes minimum service delivery standards for all USQ courses.”*

[http://www.usq.edu.au/extrafiles/ltsu/LTActionKit/study\\_modules/FlexibleLearning.htm](http://www.usq.edu.au/extrafiles/ltsu/LTActionKit/study_modules/FlexibleLearning.htm)

Informal observation would suggest that this “fleximode” is not fully understood nor appreciated – there may indeed be resistance due to perceived skills and workload issues. No minimum standards have been formally accepted – the flexidelivery policy in Appendix A is intended to move towards an effective and efficient process to achieve that while acknowledging that currently the commitment and capacity to progress towards a more consistent baseline varies dramatically across USQ.

Technology-enhanced approaches to teaching and learning activities are only approaches, albeit important ones, through which flexible learning opportunities may be made available. Flexible learning might arise through having a policy that permits students to choose from different assessment exercises, perhaps to suit their learning styles, or to undertake assessments whenever they feel that they have a sufficient understanding of the material. Another possible approach to flexible learning is blended learning which entails face-to-face and e-learning methods; another term often associated with this, is multi-modal delivery.

While as quoted below, the broad nature of flexible learning reflected in the definitions above has been acknowledged in LTSU’s Learning and teaching action kit, there is little evidence that this has been systematically mainstreamed.

*“Flexibility in learning and teaching practice can be interpreted broadly according to the following:*

- *flexible curriculum design, including flexible assessment schemes, negotiated curricula, different assessment types and teaching that addresses different learning styles*
- *flexible delivery, including distance or on-line mode, on-campus mode, intensive mode or any other mode of delivery that accounts for competing challenges faced by students today.*

*Flexibility can also apply to other aspects of university processes which affect the student learning journey, such as admissions, equity issues and faculty organisation.”*

[http://www.usq.edu.au/extrafiles/ltsu/LTActionKit/study\\_modules/FlexibleLearning.htm](http://www.usq.edu.au/extrafiles/ltsu/LTActionKit/study_modules/FlexibleLearning.htm)

### **3.0 Deployment**

Working with the definitions given above in Section 2.2, this Section briefly outlines recommendations to address the issues identified in the above analysis. Following on from that Appendix A

- a) *It is very difficult to ascertain clearly what flexible learning means at USQ.*

Recommendation 1: A stand-alone charter be developed that outlines what USQ means by “flexible learning” and provides guidelines for good practice

Recommendation 1a: The proposed flexible delivery “fleximode” policy and associated processes should be introduced within the context of that charter.

This could draw on the various references to flexibility that already exist. This charter should represent as broad a consensus as possible about the characteristics of flexible learning. It could complement that new guide to good teaching practices. The charter would act as a reference point (“standard”) for the development of related policy and procedures such as the flexible delivery “fleximode” policy and associated procedures outlined in Appendix B.

The charter might also specify broad responsibility for “championing” and supporting flexible learning. (This could be extended to “open university” as well.) It would also acknowledge the need for resources and the limitations of resources. The charter could also enable a clear articulation to students as to what they could reasonably expect with respect to flexible learning.

- b) *There appears to be a significant mismatch between the macro (strategy, policy, ‘university-level’ projects) and the micro (actual teaching practice, iterative change, individual adaptation) levels with respect to engagement with flexible learning.*

Recommendation 2: All reviews of policies and procedures should include, where relevant, consideration of appropriate aspects of flexible learning.

The following supplementary recommendation extends this to the other strategic theme of sustainability.

Recommendation 2a: Given its other strategic theme of sustainability, USQ should comprehensively review against sustainable business criteria, its [access and distribution of learning resources model specifically the use of printing](#) as a means of delivery.

It should be noted that printing by the organisation is considered an “exceptional” (rare) activity within a flexible delivery framework. However provision of material, where appropriate, in a printer-friendly form is part of a flexible delivery framework. This consideration should arguably include cost benefit analysis.

- c) *Engagement with and effectiveness of flexible learning is not systematically measured at USQ; consequently it is difficult to ascertain formally the level of engagement and to determine the impact of activities such as the range of activities mentioned under issue f.*

Recommendation 3: A range of processes be developed to measure various aspects of flexible learning. The following are initial suggestions.

Recommendation 3a: A core set of indicators be developed to measure the uptake by staff and impact on students and staff of flexible learning, or specific characteristic of it, such as flexible delivery. These indicators should be used where possible in current evaluation processes such as quality and satisfaction evaluations.

Recommendation 3b: A flexible learning program checklist be developed to ascertain what features of flexible learning may be incorporated in a program *at program level*. The checklist can be used when a program is introduced, reaccredited or reviewed (as part of the academic quality review).

Recommendation 3c: Using the flexible delivery tool set framework, an audit process be developed so that a flexible delivery baseline can be determined and then uptake (and engagement) rate against that baseline measured.

- d) *Flexible learning does not appear to be mainstreamed at USQ. Beyond that needed for “distance education”, it appears to be perceived to be a voluntary or optional activity.*
- e) *The engagement with and embedding of flexible delivery in on-campus teaching appears to be significantly variable and generally on the low side.*
- f) *Flexible delivery for distance education appears to be also limited in many cases bearing in mind that non-face-to-face (or single modal) delivery is not of itself flexible delivery.*

The previous recommendations address this at the organisational level. The following recommendations relate to incentives and requirements at the micro-level **which must be supported by adequate infrastructure and training.**

Recommendation 4: Engagement and innovation with respect to flexible learning should be a factor within the academic staff HR process e.g. induction, workload allocation and promotion.

Recommendation 4a: The learning and teaching awards system should include specific opportunities to encourage and reward flexible learning initiatives.

Recommendation 4b: Workload allocation for course development should require that the development be done within the USQ flexidelivery structure. Exceptions to this would need formal approval.

Recommendation 4c: Effective engagement with relevant aspects of flexible learning should be a measure within the BUILD process for academic staff.

These recommendations include implicit consideration of the provision of the necessary infrastructure and staff development required for flexible learning. This needs to be supported by guidelines, exemplars, shared good practices and “war stories”. For instance, the flexidelivery policy should be accompanied by the specification of teaching models and task-to-technology mappings to support staff in engaging with the flexibility delivery aspect of flexible learning.

*g) Despite the previous points, there are flexible learning initiatives and activities in both on-campus and distance education across USQ. However they are not occurring within a systematic framework – this limits quality control, efficiencies, recognition and sharing of good practices as well as lessons learned. There is a wide range of activities within university level operational projects around some aspect of the implementation of flexible learning, particularly flexible delivery, but it appears to be very technology-focussed. The dispersed nature of these activities dilutes the capacity to properly engage with flexible learning. The technology-focus of these activities weakens the link with teaching models and practices that encourages broader engagement.*

Recommendation 5: That the University review and where necessary revise the mechanisms for planning flexible learning initiatives at all levels in order to ensure that they are done in a strategic, coordinated way, with due consideration of resources and benefits.

*h) There appear to be issues, or at least perceptions of issues, with the adequacy of infrastructure, tool sets and staff engagement and skills*

Recommendation 6: In conjunction with the review covered in recommendation 6, the adequacy of resources and skills development opportunities be reviewed and any deficiencies addressed.

Recommendation 7: A systematic approach should be developed to estimating and analysing the resource and skills needs of any proposed (significant) initiatives in flexible learning. Where warranted this should extend to a cost benefit analysis.

#### **4.0 Results/review**

In this section, monitoring and measuring the success of that mainstreaming, as well as maintaining it, are discussed briefly.

Within the ADRI life-cycle, a key aspect of monitoring and measuring would be against the objectives that arise from the acceptance of the recommendations in Section 3. These objectives would detail actions and outcomes related to the recommendation the achievement of which could be monitored and measured.

Recommendation 3 and the associated supplementary recommendations explicitly address the process to first obtain a clear picture of the current “state of play” organisation-wide. This would form the

base-line for subsequent internal benchmarking of success against the objectives. Repeated at regular intervals, this would help ascertain changes and progress. The baseline would also address how much effort is required to achieve outcomes, for instance, comprehensive compliance with the basic flexible delivery tool set. *To ensure engagement, any process to mainstream flexible learning needs to start from where the majority of programs and courses currently are situated, for instance, within the flexible delivery framework outlined below.*

The following briefly discusses two aspects of measurement and monitoring. They are presented as “starting points” rather than recommendations.

#### 4.1 Flexible Delivery framework

A number of different approaches can be adopted for a flexible delivery framework by which individual course engagement with flexible delivery can be measured. (Because flexible delivery is usually associated with the web and, more specifically, a particular web-based or on-line delivery tool or set of tools, the measures are usually in terms of use of the functionality of that tool-set.) The frameworks essentially measure non-engagement through to total commitment. In the following simple framework, “on-line” refers to engagement within the relevant official delivery tool set. Each level assumes all preceding levels.

Level 0: None

There is no use.

Level 1: Exists

The course has a presence on-line but it is limited to the basic course specifications.

Level 2: Supplemented

Aspects of the course are made available on-line. The extent of supplementation can vary quite substantially from course content plus supporting material, through to course delivery e.g. lecture recordings, through to interactions.

Level 3: Dependent

Key aspects of the course, drawn from delivery, interaction and consultation, are only available on line.

Level 4: Committed

All aspects of the course, namely content, delivery and assessment, are on-line and there are no alternatives. Frequently at this level, the leading edge technology is being used to push the scope of functionality supported.

Levels 2, 3 and 4 constitute the levels of flexible delivery most associated with flexible learning. Level 2 involves the use of the tool-set as a tool for learning; level 3 has the tool-set as integral to both content and pedagogy while level 4 moves this to the point where the tool-set actually is actually integral to the teaching and indeed changes it, for instance, through new roles for teachers and learners.

**Table 1: Flexible Delivery Categories**

Level	Specifications	Content	Delivery	Communication	Interaction	Assessment
0: none						
1:Exists	yes	minimal				
2:Supplemented	yes	some	optional	optional	optional	probably not
3:Dependent	yes	yes	yes	probably yes	probably yes	at least some
4: Committed	yes	only	only	only	only	only

This flexible delivery framework summarised in Table 1 is a useful reference from a number of perspectives, for instance:

Standards: what is the minimum level that is mandated for all courses, for different types of courses?

Technically: which technologies does the organisation expect to be used at each level i.e. what is the toolkit supported for each level?

#### **4.2 Flexible Learning “Measures”**

It is commended that a simple set of measures be employed to ascertain engagement with flexible learning – or a subset, such as flexible delivery – either by whole cohort or by sub-categories of the cohort. There is a vast array of potential indicators identified in the literature. The following basic starting set are adaptations of the twelve indicators which the Australian Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG) identified best address issues related to the uptake, use and impact of e-learning within the VET sector.

1. % of USQ programs that incorporate flexible learning at program level; the use could be further classified as exists, supplemented, dependent, or committed or some other suitable scale.
2. % of USQ programs that incorporate flexible learning at course level; the use could be further classified as exists, supplemented, dependent, or committed or some other suitable scale.
3. % of USQ students who through flexible learning have or expect to have improved educational outcomes.
4. % of USQ students who believe flexible learning has given them improved options in when, where and how they engaged with USQ.
5. Student satisfaction with flexible learning experiences at USQ .
6. % of USQ academics delivering units that use flexible learning.
7. % of USQ academics who through flexible learning have changed teaching practices in the design, development and delivery of courses.
8. % of USQ academics who believe increased use of flexible learning options has improved teaching and learning outcomes.

#### **5.0 Improve**

The previous sections have been concerned with proposing some preliminary steps in “mainstreaming” flexible learning at USQ. Appendix A outlines any initial short time set of actions and some longer term activities to progress those steps. The issues identified and recommendations specified are intended to both address this start-up but also to put in place a framework for on-going advancement of flexible learning at USQ. As previously mentioned, this is appropriate not only for quality assurance and improvement but also because the nature of flexible learning is itself evolutionary.

A key point to be made with respect to improvement is the need to have a clear framework in place whereby the outcomes of the recommendations are systematically implemented – this does not have to be a new framework but a clarification of the existing framework. For instance what is the brief of Academic Board with respect to flexible learning,; how is the whole of University approach to USQ managed and monitored, and, what and how are the appropriate specific aspects and responsibilities devolved in Faculties.

## Appendix A Initial Deployment Plan

Recommendation 1: A stand-alone charter be developed that outlines what USQ means by “flexible learning” and provides guidelines for good practice

2009: The initial charter should be developed arguably using the process eventually used to develop and deploy the Guidelines for Good Teaching.

Responsible: DVC(GL), PVC(L&T), Chair (Academic Board )

Beyond: Like the Guidelines, there needs to be a process by which the charter is regular reviewed and revised given the evolutionary nature of teaching practices and flexible learning practices.

Recommendation 1a: The proposed flexible delivery “fleximode” policy and associated processes should be introduced within the context of that charter.

2009: The policy and processes should be introduced having due regard to the existing resources (including staff workload) and also the current baseline.

Responsible: DVC(GL), PVC(L&T), DAIS, Faculties

Beyond: The outcomes from a number of other recommendations relate to the on-going review and improvement of the fleximode policy and associated procedures.

Recommendation 2: All reviews of policies and procedures should include, where relevant, consideration of appropriate aspects of flexible learning.

2009: Planned activities around policy and procedure reviews in 2009 should implement this recommendation. Any necessary changes to review specifications and documentation templates should be implemented.

The current activity around program and course quality reviews should be a particular focus of this deployment as could be reaccreditation activities.

Responsible: DVC(S)/(GL), PVC(AQ), Deans, Assoc Deans (Academic)

Any necessary changes to staff induction, development and training to support this should be implemented.

Responsible: HR, PVC(L&T), Assoc Deans (Academic), Assoc Deans(L&T)

Recommendation 2a: Given its other strategic theme of sustainability, USQ should comprehensively review its [access and distribution of learning resources model specifically the use of printing as a means of delivery](#).

2009: A working group with appropriate representation e.g. from DAIS, DICT and Faculties should be set up to carry out the initial review and report to the appropriate governance boards.

Responsible: DVC(GL)

Recommendation 3: A range of processes be developed to measure various aspects of flexible learning. The following are initial suggestions.

Recommendation 3a: A core set of indicators be developed to measure the uptake by staff and impact on students and staff of flexible learning, or specific characteristic of it, such as flexible delivery. These indicators should be used where possible in current evaluation processes such as quality and satisfaction evaluations.

Recommendation 3b: A flexible learning program checklist be developed to ascertain what features of flexible learning may be incorporated in a program *at program level*. The checklist can be used when a program is introduced, reaccredited or reviewed (as part of the academic quality review).

Recommendation 3c: Using the flexible delivery tool set framework, an audit process be developed so that a flexible delivery baseline can be determined and then uptake (and engagement) rate against that baseline measured.

2009: The supplementary recommendations be implemented perhaps through LTEC or a suitable working group of Academic Board in conjunction with the Planning and Quality Office.  
Responsible: DVC(GL), PVC(AQ), PVC(L&T), Academic Board, Planning and Quality

Recommendation 4: Engagement and innovation with respect to flexible learning should be a factor within the academic staff HR process e.g. induction, workload allocation and promotion.

2009: Relevant policies and processes such as for promotion should be reviewed and modified where necessary to implement this and the supplementary recommendations..

Responsible: HR

Recommendation 4a: The learning and teaching awards system should include specific opportunities to encourage and reward flexible learning initiatives.  
Responsible: PVC(L&T)

Recommendation 4b: Workload allocation for course development should require that the development be done within the USQ flexidelivery structure. Exceptions to this would need formal approval.  
Responsible: Deans, HR

Recommendation 4c: Effective engagement with relevant aspects of flexible learning should be a measure within the BUILD process for academic staff.  
Responsible: Deans, HR, supervisors

Recommendation 5: That the University review and where necessary revise the mechanisms for planning flexible learning initiatives at all levels in order to ensure that they are done in a strategic, coordinated way, with due consideration of resources and benefits.

Recommendation 6: In conjunction with the review covered in recommendation 6, the adequacy of resources and skills development opportunities be reviewed and any deficiencies addressed.

2009: Initial review be carried out by a working group that should report to SLC and Academic Board.

Responsible: Given the proposed organisational structure associated with the DVC(Global learning) DVC(GL) position currently advertised, it would seem opportune for that position to have an overarching strategic role with respect to flexible learning. This would also enable the interaction between the “leading edge” developments and the mainstream deployment.

Recommendation 7: A systematic approach should be developed to estimate and analyse the resource and skills needs of any proposed (significant) initiatives in flexible learning. Where warranted this should extend to a cost benefit analysis.

2009: This could be developed as a follow up to addressing recommendation 3.  
Responsible: HR, Finance, LTSU, Deans

## Appendix B Fleximode (Flexible delivery) policy

### Policy Title: USQ Fleximode Policy

1. Introduction
2. Purpose
3. Definitions
4. Principles
5. Implementation
6. Responsibility

#### 1. Introduction

<b>Policy reference number</b>												
<b>Scope and application</b>	Applicable to all Faculties, the Learning and Teaching Support Unit, Division of Academic Information Services and Division of Information and Communication Technologies											
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Flexible Learning)											
<b>Policy type/category</b>	Management/Learning and Teaching											
<b>Related legislation/regulations/guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USQ Framework for Assessing the Quality of Course materials and Delivery Strategies</li> <li>• USQ Statement on Technology-Enhanced Learning and Teaching</li> </ul>											
<b>Associated USQ policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USQ Learning and Teaching Plan</li> </ul>											
<b>Delegations authority</b>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Delegate</b></th> <th><b>Authority</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Executive Director (DAIS)</td> <td>Ensure the development of the strategy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PVC( Learning and Teaching)</td> <td>Ensure adequacy of the available staff training and support</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Deans and Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching)</td> <td>Ensure the implementation of the developed strategy</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Chief Technology Officer</td> <td>Ensure the adequacy of resources to support the strategy.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Delegate</b>	<b>Authority</b>	Executive Director (DAIS)	Ensure the development of the strategy	PVC( Learning and Teaching)	Ensure adequacy of the available staff training and support	Deans and Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching)	Ensure the implementation of the developed strategy		Chief Technology Officer	Ensure the adequacy of resources to support the strategy.
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<b>Review date/s</b>	Semester 1, 2012											

#### 2. Purpose

This policy will support the flexibility of the student learning experience by using multi-modal options to establish comparable access for students to key course materials regardless of location, campus or mode of enrolment. It will also enhance the quality and version control of USQ course and program learning resources.

‘Comparable access’ for all students means that course materials are designed in accordance with the needs of particular student markets and the capabilities and resources of the University and those of its partners. As such, not all resource packages will have the same amount of course materials but they will be consistent in their presentation and enable students to achieve the course learning objectives.

The purpose of the fleximode policy is to support USQ’s mission to be a premier flexible and open university by

- the provision of flexible learning opportunities and comparable access for all students to course and program learning resources regardless of location, campus or mode of enrolment;
- the provision a single, standard process for the creation of course materials enabling multi-modal distribution;
- enhanced quality and version control through the creation of a single storage and archiving process for all USQ course materials; and
- ensuring that all course materials are stored and managed by the University in a centrally co-ordinated manner.

### **3. Policy**

1. A minimum Fleximode standard (content) and an associated minimum Fleximode toolkit (delivery) will be established that covers an identified set of course teaching models.

2. The minimum Fleximode standard and toolkit for the coming academic year will be reviewed regularly but only substantially changed once every three years at the most. This review will be carried out by the xxx. It will take place early enough in the previous year to enable any changes to be promulgated and adequately supported.

3. Commencing Semester 1 of the academic year, courses regardless of mode must use the minimum Fleximode standard and toolkit for the applicable teaching model,

4. An exception to 4 requires the approval of the relevant Dean. Exceptions only apply on an annual basis.

5. The University will provide access to the course materials via appropriate additional modes (tools) e.g. print or CD at the discretion of the host Faculty or Unit.

6. An advanced Fleximode standard and toolkit including additional multimedia elements and other communication technologies will also be identified. This standard and toolkit will include the basic ones.

6. There may be priority programs/courses for which the advanced standard and toolkit are mandated. For other programs and courses they will be optional and dependent on available resources.

7. Staff from the Learning and Teaching Support Unit (LTSU) and the Division of Academic Information Services (DAIS) will assist those responsible for the development and maintenance of programs and courses implement the require standard and toolkit..

### **5. Implementation**

Once the minimum and advanced standards and toolkits have been identified for the coming year, Faculties, DAIS and LTSU will negotiate an implementation plan. This plan will take into consideration available support, resources and time constraints.

All fleximode courses will be aligned with the standards for computing as recommended by the Division of ICT Services see: <http://www.usq.edu.au/ict/students/standards/default.htm>.

### **6. Responsibility**

Quality of the content and presentation of the course materials is the shared responsibility of Faculties, DAIS and LTSU.

Central co-ordination of the storage and management of course materials in University courses rests with the Division of Academic Information Services (DAIS). All current course materials must be made available to DAIS and will be kept for a minimum of two (2) years in line with USQ record keeping requirements. See: <http://www.usq.edu.au/resources/116.pdf>

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Division</b>
Content	Faculties
Course and Program Design	Faculties
Design support including skills development	Learning and Teaching Support Unit
Replication and Distribution of Study Materials	Division of Academic Information Services – (DAIS)
Access to Library Materials	Division of Academic Information Services – (DAIS)
Program Offering	Faculties
Student Evaluations	Office of Planning and Quality

Policy Owner:  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Approved by:  
USQ LTEC  
Date Approved:

Approved by:  
SLC  
Date Approved:

## ***Appendix C: Proposed 2009 Fleximode Basic toolkit.***

### **Proposed minimum Fleximode standard and basic toolkit for 2009**

- (i) Student Portal - ?CD?**
  - How to access USQ systems (USQConnect, USQAdmin, USQAssist)
  - USQ StudyDesk Support
  - Information and assistance
  - Index of services available
  
- (ii) USQ StudyDesk – Moodle ?and CD?**
  - Course specification information
  - Introductory/welcome message (audio/video/text) by course coordinator
  - Announcements
  - Discussion forum/s
  - PDF or HTML version of course materials (eg. Introductory Book/Study Guide/Resource Book/other)
  - Links to reference materials, Library databases, Digital Resources Collection (DiReCt)

### **Proposed 2009 implementation strategy**

Faculties are required to provide DAIS and LTSU with a complete list of courses on offer for each semester. Changes to the list must also be communicated to DAIS and LTSU as soon as possible. The courses that will be transitioned to fleximode will be identified.

The process for the development of fleximode courses will be negotiated between the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and the Principal Manager (Learning Resources), DAIS to ensure that all materials are finalised and available for access/distribution to students for the commencement of the upcoming teaching period. This will vary according to the amount of multimedia elements and copyrighted materials involved, as well as the location of those students enrolled in the course program.

DAIS will provide ICE (Integrated Content Environment) templates to enable the course materials to be developed in such a way as they can be accessed in different learning environments and rendered in either print, CD/DVD and/or online. Additionally, members of each program/course team will be provided with a range of resources and services to assist in the design and re/development of course materials.