

UOW's Achieving Purposeful Transitions (APT) Framework

INFORMED CHOICES AND EFFECTIVE NAVIGATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

OVERVIEW

The University of Wollongong's (UOW) *Achieving Purposeful Transitions (APT) Framework* provides an institution-wide approach to working with *undergraduate domestic* students to enhance student experience and increase students' agency, including their capacity to make informed choices within and beyond UOW. The APT framework addresses *UOW's Access & Participation Enabling Plan for Student Equity 2018-2020* by adopting a **whole student, whole journey, whole of institution** approach to facilitating the success of equity group students. The aim in adopting this framework is to increase the impact of Higher Education Participation & Partnership (HEPPP) Funding on the participation of domestic undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds at UOW. In this respect, the APT framework will specifically contribute to UOW's strategic objective to increase the participation of domestic undergraduate students enrolled from low socioeconomic (LSES) backgrounds (to 21%) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (to 2.5%) at UOW by 2020.

UOW's APT Framework will guide the development and implementation of policies, pedagogy, strategies, programs, and activities to support the success of students from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education, and is underpinned by equity and transition literature¹, best practice across Australian universities, and an extensive consultation process with UOW academic and professional staff and students.

CONTEXT

Literature² reporting work undertaken by Universities in the transition of students to higher education consistently identifies the domains of *Induction*, *Development* and *Becoming*. The domain of *Induction* places emphasis on the role of the institution to provide successful induction strategies and programs³, whereas *Development* emphasises the role of the individual student in their commitment and motivation to study, their engagement with learning, interactions with staff and participation in co-curricular activities.⁴ However, critical to success is the domain of *Becoming* whereby the *institution and the student work in partnership* in ways that embrace students' lived reality and that recognise that student transitions involve a non-linear journey.⁵ This is summarised in figure 1.

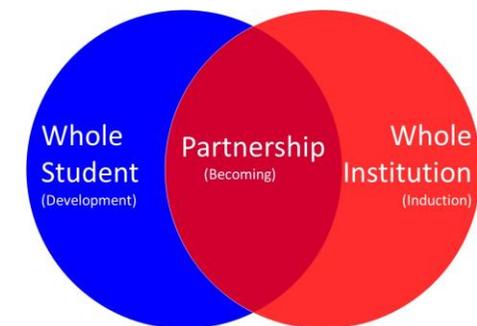


Figure 1: Domains of Student Transition

¹ Halsey, 2017; Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010; Tinto, 2011; Naylor, Baik & Arkoudis, 2018; Harvey & Luckman, 2018; Edwards & McMillan, 2015; Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008

² Gale & Parker, 2014

³ Kift & Nelson, 2005; Krause & Coates, 2008

⁴ Kift, Nelson & Clarke, 2010

⁵ Gale & Parker, 2014

To enhance implementation UOW’s APT Framework aligns with the *UOW Curriculum Model* (see figure 2) and emergent models being used to enhance student experience (for example *UOW Online Student Experience model* – see figure 3 below).

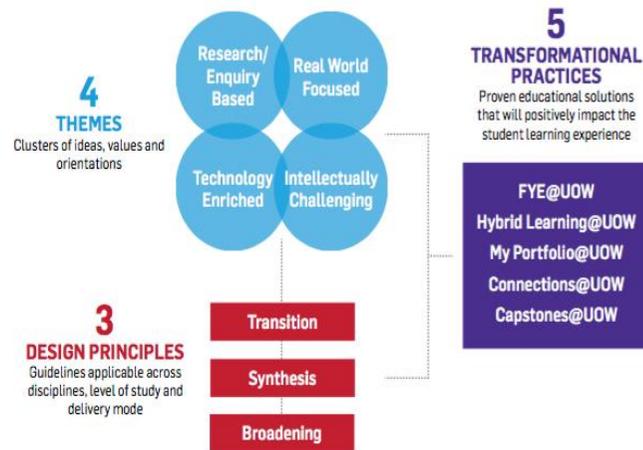


Figure 2: UOW Curriculum Model

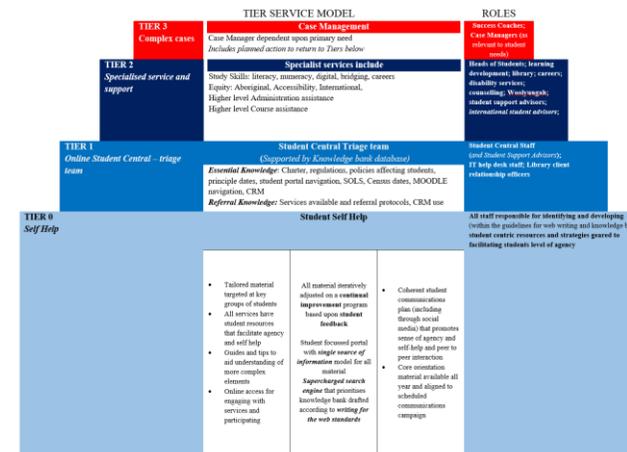


Figure 3: UOW Online Student Experience model

The framework will bridge the curricular and co-curricular spheres of student engagement in ways that enhance coherent practice for all staff and seamless transition of students from underrepresented backgrounds. Of importance to the APT framework is that the UOW Curriculum Model involves *Transition* (‘enabling a smooth, supported shift into higher education and a successful transition to the world of work and lifelong learning’ for its’ students) as one of the three design principles. To date, action around this Curriculum Model principle has seen the development of innovative teaching practice occurring in subjects and courses across the University. These innovative teaching practices will form the basis of an institution-wide approach to student transition.

The *Online Student Experience model*, (being tested in UOW Online), is being used to identify and minimise duplication and replication of effort, clarify and delineate role activity, develop single source information and refine our approach to student facing self-help resources that facilitate students’ sense of agency and development as career ready, capable graduates. The *Online Student Experience model* involves a pyramid tiered approach to student engagement across the student lifecycle to proactively target services and support where they are most needed. The APT Framework will involve strategies that inform all levels of the pyramid.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE APT FRAMEWORK

The APT Framework is underpinned by the following principles

- **Whole Student:** pedagogy will be fortified by an empathetic institutional approach that focuses on learning outcomes that value, respect and empower our diverse student cohort, and facilitate student success. UOW pedagogy will be informed by four key themes identified in the higher education transition literature⁶: connectedness, student agency, financial and personal life, and discipline and academic knowledge. The APT framework will involve the use of strategies that address these themes in ways that facilitate students to navigate their journey into and through higher education with determination and grit to achieve meaningful outcomes.
- **Whole Institution:** adopting the APT framework at a strategic level will involve assessment of policies with an equity lens and where appropriate policy adjustment. Success will depend upon the continued use of quality cycles (such as the UOW assessment cycle accessed here <https://www.uow.edu.au/curriculum-transformation/aqc/index.html>), underpinned by robust systems that effectively test policy implementation and include active schedules of renewal. This will be reinforced by a collaborative approach involving Faculties and professional units in a cohort-based approach to enhancing student experience.⁷
- **Whole Journey:** the APT framework guides the various transitions that students experience throughout their higher education journey from preparing for university, across first year and middle year programs, to preparing for employment. In this way APT framework strategies will connect the University's existing Pre-Access (Outreach) and Employability strategies.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** The APT framework requires a partnership between the student and the University that is based on trust, shared responsibility, collaboration, interdependence as we work towards the achievement of a mutually beneficial goals.⁸ As well, the framework will bring together existing services, programs and activities across the University in order to achieve a shared goal⁹ of increasing participation and success of students from underrepresented backgrounds. It is important to note that the adoption of a cohort based approach will benefit of all UOW students in the cohort.
- **Evidence Based:** Policies, strategies, pedagogy, programs and activities that address the learning outcomes articulated in the framework below will have a strong evidence-based approach¹⁰ that will align with a broader evaluation framework for access and participation. This will ensure that all aspects of the design and implementation of the framework have a theoretical underpinning; are benchmarked against best practice; are contextualised to UOW through rigorous stakeholder and student consultation; are evaluated to measure outcomes and impact; and feed into cycles of continuous improvement.

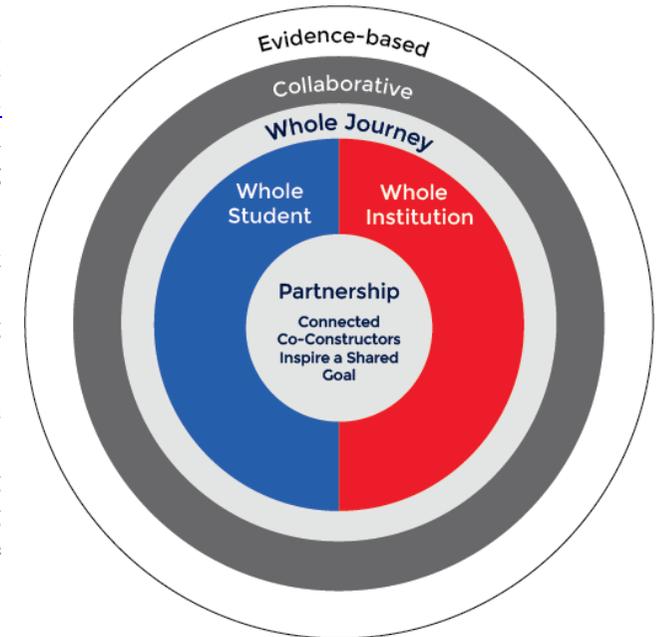


Figure 4: UOW APT Framework

⁶ Devlin, Kift, Nelson, Smith & McKay, 2012

⁷ Hickey-Moody et al. 2010, p232, Smyth 2012, Gale & Mills, 2015

⁸ Waddock, 1991; Billett, Ovens, Clemans, Seddon, 2007

⁹ Billett, Ovens, Clemans, Seddon, 2007

¹⁰ Hoffman, Bennett, & Mar, 2016

IMPLEMENTING THE APT FRAMEWORK

As can be seen the UOW APT framework will sit at the nexus between the role of the institution and the role of the student and be clearly positioned as a partnership between UOW and the student in order to:

- create opportunities and provide resources for students to make informed choices about their engagement and pathway within higher education; and
- embed knowledge and skills that develop students to effectively navigate the institution with confidence.

In order to achieve this UOW and the students will work together to:

- get to know each other and develop a shared understanding (Connected) of what is needed;
- co-construct knowledge and meaning (Co-Constructors); and
- develop a sense of purpose, underpinned by the confidence to achieve (Inspired by a Shared Goal).

This will include strategies such as:

- identifying Equity Champions within the Faculties;
- targeting large engine room courses with high proportions of equity students enrolled;
- working collaboratively with Course Teams and UOW Departments to implement the APT framework by leveraging best practice strategies, pedagogies and activities that could be activated or reshaped within the transition framework;
- developing an evaluation framework to enable continual improvement and reporting.

The table below outlines the elements of the framework mapped to best practice strategies that will be considered for use.

	Connected	Co-Constructors	Inspired towards a Shared Goal
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will get to know each other (our values and our identity) and work together to develop shared understanding of expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work together to co-construct knowledge of the academic discipline through an approach that celebrates the diverse knowledge and experiences that each student brings to the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work collaboratively to develop a sense of purpose, underpinned by determination, grit and confidence so that our students can effectively navigate higher education and make informed choices about their lives and study patterns.
Framework Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a connection between students and staff and between Faculties and professional units • Developing a connection between students. • Developing a sense of belonging and engaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing curriculum that is student centred whereby students can develop knowledge or core ways about working in their discipline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of strengths and development areas and engage in ongoing development. • Provide clarity around the support services available and how to access them. • Develop abilities to navigate the University



	Connected	Co-Constructors	Inspired towards a Shared Goal
	as part of a learning community.		<p>environment and culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating big picture understanding of their University studies and where it will lead students. Developing an awareness of motivations for attending University and their academic and vocational goals.
Illustrative Curriculum Embedded Strategies in large engine room courses (Becoming)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The establishment of student pods throughout their course to build cohort identity and sense of belonging. Integrating peer mentoring into timetabled course structure (face to face and online) that addresses academic content and transition pedagogy. Increasing awareness of staff about the aggregated make-up of their cohorts and providing strength-based student profiles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum that reflects and affirms marginalised student histories and subjectivities. Structuring the student learning experience in ways that open it up and make it possible for students to contribute from who they are and what they know¹¹. Curriculum that acknowledges that students enter the institution with a breadth of knowledge and experiences, with embedded learning development in the curriculum where there is an identified skill or knowledge gap. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making the implicit, explicit through reviews of student-facing subject material (i.e. subject outlines) and a communications plan and tools to embed key messages into subject and course platforms (i.e Moodle, Lectures). Pedagogy that integrates wellbeing, academic and digital literacy support within the curriculum and is available in online modules for students to engage with in a timely manner. Embedded career development and/or work integrated learning component within the curriculum to develop a sense of purpose and active citizenship with their study.
Illustrative Co-Curricular Strategies that co-exist with large engine room courses (Development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with students early (pre-enrolment – particularly around online-enrolment) to develop initial connections (i.e. Welcome and follow up calling campaigns at critical semester points) Institution-wide withdrawal and re-engagement strategy to increase institutional understanding of student attrition. Tracking of student progress and proactive referral onto Student Success Coaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-commencement online bridging programs that enhance foundational knowledge and embrace transition pedagogy. Students engaged as partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-efficacy tools on students’ commencement and throughout their course to better understand the needs of the incoming cohort and for students to better understand their needs within the higher education environment. Promotion of engagement in Careers and co-curricular services to build social and professional capital

¹¹ Gale, 2009



<p>Illustrative broader institution strategies that apply to all students (Induction)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student communications plan across the semester that disseminates timely messages. • Modularised and online approach to Student Orientation. • Working across UOW departments to ensure equity principles are embedded in student engagement activities. • Institutional networks for specific cohorts (i.e. Part-Time Students Network) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that equity principles are embedded into UOW policy and are supported by strong systems of implementation and review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal planning for pathways through higher education at critical transition points throughout the student lifecycle.
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