



Repositioning La Trobe University

Green Paper | Summary of 16 Proposals July 2007

About the Green Paper

The purpose of this Green Paper is to stimulate a focused discussion within the University about what we do, how we do it, and how we might change our ways of doing things to further develop our core business of research, learning and teaching over the next 10 years.

This Green Paper is my attempt to evaluate the challenges and opportunities that La Trobe University faces in 2007, and over the next 10 years. It represents the beginning of a new planning process for the University. We need to agree on our primary institutional objectives for the decade ahead, so that each operational unit (faculty, school, research centre and administrative division) can then align its own activities and objectives with these. If we cannot achieve this consistency of objective and commonality of effort, then rather than harnessing our resources in the interests of the University, we will dissipate them, for which we will all be the poorer.

This summary of the Green Paper provides a snapshot of 16 proposals, and a brief overview of the rationale underpinning them.

A full explanation of these proposals and the way forward can be found at <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/vc>

I have arranged a series of staff briefings and discussion sessions to take place during July and August, and ask that you put a time in your diary to attend one of these meetings. Feedback on the Green Paper can also be forwarded to me at dme@latrobe.edu.au

Paul Johnson
Vice Chancellor

Timeline for the development of the Strategic Plan

Week commencing 23 July	Circulation of Green Paper (GP)
July-August (Consultation, discussion and feedback phase)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GP Briefing & Discussion Sessions - Paul Johnson, Vice Chancellor (all campuses). All staff invited. 2. Feedback on GP to Paul Johnson, via email. All staff invited to email feedback. 3. Discussion of GP within University.
September – December	Paul Johnson works with members of the Senior Management Group to create a 10-year Strategic Plan for La Trobe University. Feedback from Green Paper incorporated into planning.
10 October	Presentation of Draft Strategic Plan to Academic Board.
November	Presentation of Draft Strategic Plan to Council.
10 December (Strategic Plan completed)	Final Presentation of Strategic Plan to Council.

Full version of the Green Paper can be found at <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/vc>

16 Proposals

No.	Headline	Proposal	Why this is proposed
1	Clarify and document our core principles and points of differentiation.	That La Trobe University define an explicit statement of core values that are derived from the formal objectives of the University, reflect the commitment to social and environmental responsibility demonstrated by the University community since its foundation, and are relevant to the circumstances of the University and its members in the early 21st century.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From its inception La Trobe intended to be distinct in its mission: to serve the community through the relevance and inclusiveness of its research and teaching, and by graduating rounded citizens as well as trained professionals. Looking critically at the content and mode of our teaching and broader patterns of community engagement, La Trobe is less radical, less different from other universities, than it was 20 years ago. La Trobe's founding principles are as relevant now as in the 60s. An explicit statement of values provides a clear benchmark internally for assessing direction, and sends a clear message to the outside world regarding how we view ourselves, and how we intend contributing to the common good.
2	Establish and support integrated programs for student engagement.	That La Trobe University establish and support a set of integrated programs for student enrichment and engagement, in order to create a more fulfilling experience of university life for La Trobe students, and to enhance their employment and life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be true to our founding objectives we must provide ways for students to develop a broad set of life skills within their formal education and through extra-curricular activities. We should aim to provide each student with engagement in a progressive learning community so they will graduate with an enhanced ability to succeed in employment and personal and social life. We need to make distinctive educational opportunities available so La Trobe becomes the preferred destination for a greater number of senior high school students.
3	Review, renew and refresh content and delivery of undergraduate programs.	That each faculty and school review its undergraduate teaching programme, with the intention of renewing and refreshing both content and mode of delivery in 2009.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When La Trobe was founded it offered undergraduate programs that were radical by comparison with others available; many programs now look staid and conservative. Content and mode of delivery of undergraduate programs may be a factor in Australian students finding them less attractive in recent years. Some schools and faculties are reviewing their programs, but this needs to be done by all teaching units.
4	Consolidate undergraduate programs and reduce teaching time by 25% by 2010.	That in order to promote more research activity and to facilitate the development of new graduate coursework programs, undergraduate programs should be consolidated so that very small units are no longer maintained, and staff time devoted to undergraduate teaching is reduced across the entire university by at least 25% by 2010.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In parallel with renewal we need to consolidate undergraduate teaching activities. We need to release staff time from undergraduate teaching in order to support expansion of graduate teaching and of research activities. To increase efficiency of undergraduate teaching we need to offer fewer units to larger groups of students.
5	Expand professional development support for sessional teachers; evaluate Teaching Assistantships.	That the University expand the provision of professional development support for sessional teachers, and evaluate the costs and benefits of creating a significant number of doctoral-level Teaching Assistantships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer and larger undergraduate units will probably require greater use of sessional teaching staff. To support sessional teaching staff in delivering high quality, responsive teaching, we need to enhance support for their professional development. To ensure an adequate supply of well-trained sessional teachers we should seriously consider providing PhD scholarships for doctoral Teaching Assistants.
6	Offer graduate programs designed to help increase international student activity.	That each faculty offer a range of graduate coursework programs - designed to maximise the ability of La Trobe to raise the scale of international student activity to that of our peer institutions by 2012.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intense competition for international students means programs will need renewing or replacing regularly. Each faculty needs an appropriate range of graduate programs to meet the anticipated growth in demand from domestic and international students. Program development needs to be consumer-led and tailored to the market.

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7	Devise mechanism for promoting inter-faculty trade in teaching services.	That the University devise a mechanism to facilitate and promote inter-faculty trade in teaching services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently strong disincentives to establishing multi-faculty teaching programs. • Limitations on inter-faculty trade inappropriately restrict student choices outside the faculties. • Teaching effort is duplicated because of preference for in-house courses. • A new, more transparent internal resource model will reduce disincentives across faculties for cooperation in teaching delivery.
8	Develop strong partnerships and further develop online and other learning platforms to ensure the delivery of quality regional education.	That the University develop strong partnership arrangements especially with TAFEs to assist with the creation and delivery of university learning and teaching in regional Victoria, and further develop online and other learning platforms to ensure that a quality university education can be delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are major challenges to operating in a sustainable manner in the regions; the cost of providing teaching services is substantially greater because there are limited opportunities to achieve economies of scale. • We need to work smarter; this must include increasing our level of involvement with TAFEs, and improving the online learning experience we deliver. • We need to better align Federal funding with the cost of regional operations.
9	Establish and support cross-faculty research institutes.	That the University establish and support a small number of cross-faculty research institutes which will draw on existing research capacity within the University to obtain significant additional external research funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing research structures do not harness the full potential of a multi-faculty university. • Many potential research funders are driven by issues which extend across discipline boundaries, but our research structure is arranged primarily around faculties/disciplines. • The University could do more to draw on its research strengths to address such cross-disciplinary research issues as water resources, ageing, bio-security and international development.
10	Devise and implement workload model that recognises different levels of research activity.	That each faculty devise and implement a workload model which recognises the different levels of research activity of academic staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University does not have a well-developed workload model allocating teaching and administrative duties away from research-active staff towards those who do not have the same research commitments. • We need to implement an incentive structure that better supports our leading researchers.
11	Develop and implement mechanism for partitioning Commonwealth income into teaching and research.	That the University develop and implement a mechanism for partitioning Commonwealth income into teaching and research elements, and for allocating this income according to measured levels of teaching and research activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth funding of students recognises that significant staff time is devoted to research rather than teaching activities; most Universities including La Trobe distribute this funding according to student load in different faculties/schools. • Staff research activity is not spread evenly, but internal distribution of Commonwealth funds by student load assumes equal research activity is undertaken by every academic. • A more rational internal funding model would recognise the concentration of research activity and allocate resources accordingly. • La Trobe is already implementing a new budget model based on real cost of activities and services that will facilitate a fairer, more transparent process of resource allocation. • The new budget model will provide financial underpinning for faculty-based workload models.

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12	Develop career and promotion pathways that value academic staff who are teaching-focused.	That the University develop career and promotion pathways which recognise the reality that many valued members of academic staff are teaching-focused but not always research-active.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University currently draws two-thirds of its total revenue from teaching activities; opportunities for promotion are extremely limited for staff without a significant research profile. The University should recognise the specialisation of some academic staff in teaching. Teaching-focused staff should be rewarded in an equivalent way to those who specialise in research.
13	Identify areas of overlap or duplication in business processes.	That the University undertake an analysis of business processes across a wide range of support services in order to identify areas of duplication and overlap so that we can provide clients with a simpler and more responsive support structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many support services do not know if they are meeting the primary needs of their clients, do not clearly understand who their clients are, and have not directly sought their views on the extent and quality of their services. Clients do not know what to expect from many service units because responsibility for delivery is frequently fragmented, leading to duplication of effort or under-provision. A PriceWaterhouseCoopers study of administrative processes has indicated the University would achieve more value from administrative services by eliminating unnecessary or uneconomic practices. The University is seeking additional financial support from DEST's Workplace Productivity Program for a program of productivity improvement in administrative services. Productivity improvements are needed to release financial resources and staff time for other activities (eg student recruitment and engagement, curriculum modernisation, enhanced support for teaching and research, modernisation of buildings, improved marketing, expansion of alumni activity etc.)
14	Implement a new budget model based on full cost allocation.	That the University implement a new budget model based on full cost allocation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Trobe has operated an internal budget model which top-slices central administrative costs from total revenue, allocating the remainder to faculties on the basis of workload; this is being replaced with a cost-allocation model in which all revenue is allocated to the units that earn it, and internal services consumed also charged directly to them. The new model will make explicit the real cost of each service, permitting benchmarking of service costs and service provision with industry norms.
15	Develop clear policy of relative responsibilities for external relations.	That La Trobe develop a clear policy about the relative responsibility of the University, faculties, campuses, and other organisational units in the formulation and delivery of external relations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmentation of responsibilities for external engagement has weakened La Trobe's public image. The University needs a clearer understanding of the allocation of external engagement responsibilities between different operational units – eg faculties, schools, research centres, institutes, campuses, central divisions. A clearer set of protocols is needed defining the responsibility and authority of different organisational units in engaging with external agents. This implies a need for more clearly defined policies and practices rather than centralisation of activities.
16	Expand alumni relations and fundraising opportunities.	That La Trobe expand its alumni relations and fundraising operations, and provide clearer opportunities for former students and staff to contribute to the current and future activities of the University.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Trobe's renewed commitment to being socially responsible, inclusive, relevant and radical should extend beyond the current university community.