Learning and Teaching Plan
2018-2022
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

La Trobe University acknowledges that our campuses are located on the lands of many traditional custodians in Victoria. We recognise their ongoing connection to the land and value their unique contribution to the University and wider Australian society.

We are committed to providing opportunities for Indigenous Australians, both as individuals and communities, through teaching and learning, research and community partnerships across all of our campuses.

La Trobe University pays our respect to Indigenous Elders, past, present and emerging and will continue to incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems and protocols as part of our ongoing strategic and operational business.
La Trobe aims to be recognised globally for the quality of our students’ educational experiences and outcomes. In an age of rapid digital advances, innovation and disruption, education will be more important than ever in empowering learners of all ages and backgrounds to thrive as informed citizens and engaged lifelong learners.

This Learning and Teaching Plan presents an ambitious five-year blueprint for learning and teaching excellence and effectiveness at La Trobe. We combine a focus on preparing our students and our staff for ‘day after tomorrow’ (Hinssen, 2017) thinking, while at the same time emphasising the importance of getting the basics of high impact learning and teaching right in the here and now.

While technologies are transforming the social and educational landscape, a top quality university education will continue to be highly valued. Nevertheless, we must remain at the leading edge of curriculum experimentation and digital creativity if we are to be relevant to our students and our communities over the next five years.

We will continue to provide internationally recognised academic programs while at the same time transforming our curriculum to provide a personalised learning experience for our students. We will push the boundaries of traditional delivery modes and timetabling as we partner with students to explore creative ways to bundle learning achievements with digitally enriched blends. Working in close partnership with our staff is key to achieving the goals of this Plan. The Academic portfolio will partner with academic Colleges and staff to build capability in contemporary curriculum design, to support the design of technology-enhanced and inclusive learning experiences, and to share and celebrate examples of teaching excellence and creativity.

Underpinning the Learning and Teaching Plan is a Quality Framework and seven La Trobe Teaching Excellence Principles, namely: passion, rigour, relevance, ethics, effectiveness, innovation and reflection. These Principles will shape our scholarly learning and teaching initiatives and will provide academic staff with a rich resource to guide course and subject design and delivery and document teaching outcomes and impact.

Outcomes and impact will also be evident through a refreshed focus on the use of learning analytics, as well as subject and course level data that staff will be able to use to monitor course level performance. Students, too, will be empowered to draw on learning analytics to self-assess and to draw on support aimed at enhancing the likelihood of success in their studies.

Employability and industry-relevant graduate capabilities are key characteristics of the La Trobe graduate. Achieving student success involves close collaboration with industry partners and employers to develop relevant curriculum and work-integrated learning opportunities.

A bespoke Student Success and Retention Plan provides more comprehensive detail about strategies for achieving these student outcomes.

Teaching excellence and research excellence go hand-in-hand at La Trobe. This Plan articulates the complementarity of teaching and research as mutually reinforcing in an environment where students learn from world-class researchers and benefit from research-infused curricula.

Our partnerships, too, enrich the quality and breadth of our curriculum offerings and pathways to university. On the international front, our educational partnerships add culturally enriching opportunities for students from over 100 countries who make La Trobe University their educational home.

Going forward, this Plan is supported through annual action plans through which we will monitor progress and success. I look forward to collaborating with our students, staff, community and industry partners as we continue to prioritise learning and teaching excellence and innovation at La Trobe.

Professor Kerri-Lee Krause
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Our learning and teaching mission
To provide an outstanding student experience to all La Trobe students in the domains of teaching quality, learner engagement, learning resources, student support and skill development.

Our learning and teaching vision
The experience of learning and teaching at La Trobe allows our students and teachers to achieve their individual and shared learning goals.

Our values
This approach is based on our values of:
- inclusiveness, diversity, equity and social justice
- pursuing excellence and sustainability in everything we do
- championing our local communities in Melbourne’s north and regional Victoria
- being willing to innovate and disrupt the traditional way of doing things.

Our academic cultural qualities
Our vision is underpinned by La Trobe’s cultural qualities: we are connected, innovative, accountable and care. Collectively, these qualities will guide our student-centred approach to ensuring our students are given the greatest possible opportunity for success:

Connected
Learning and teaching at La Trobe is a collaborative endeavour, across our Schools and Departments, our communities, and in the national and international higher education sectors.

Innovative
We are open to new and challenging evidence-based ideas, and seek to adapt and implement the best of these for the needs of La Trobe students and staff.

Accountable
We plan for, conduct and act on the results of evaluation of our learning and teaching performance and hold each other accountable.

Care
We respect the needs, roles and expertise of all involved in learning and teaching – students, professional and administrative staff and academic staff.
La Trobe is proud of its history of richly diverse student cohorts and has long recognised that many of its students are first in family to attend university, and for many of our international students, the first to study overseas. There is recognition that the diversity of the student cohort is increasing, and the needs of students are complex as they seek to balance their studies with employment, caring responsibilities and family and community expectations. Contemporary universities must meet these expectations.

La Trobe seeks to ensure the quality of the student experience across all aspects of the student lifecycle, from the initial transition experience, through the academic experience, the students’ engagement with campus life more broadly, and the graduate experience. The importance of the student experience is acknowledged in the creation of the two new positions of the PVC Student Success to oversee student support, orientation and transition and employability; and the PVC Learning Quality and Innovation to oversee staff engagement and development, teaching quality and curriculum innovation. Central to the success of these portfolios are strong and effective working relationships with the Colleges, Divisions and Units of the University, with whom they collaborate to innovate, lead and deliver the student learning experience.

An outstanding student academic experience requires engaged and capable academic staff. The Learning and Teaching Plan encompasses the La Trobe Teaching Excellence Principles that articulate the distinctive excellence expectations of La Trobe teachers. It anticipates the creation of a new La Trobe Learning and Teaching Academy and commits to high level advice and support for curriculum leaders and teams.

The second core objective of the Strategic Plan is graduate employability. We are addressing in 2018 a growing recognition in Australia and globally that an undergraduate degree is no longer enough to guarantee graduates satisfying careers.

The fourth core objective is our anchor to enhance student experience and outcomes. La Trobe’s Strategic Partnership Framework provides direction to ensure the creation and management of its educational partnerships.

These four objectives of La Trobe Strategic Plan 2018-2022 are supported by three enablers: these are One University Many Communities, Operational Excellence, and Revenue Growth. These enablers feed expression in the Learning and Teaching Plan in our recognition of the importance of La Trobe’s multi-campus character and drive towards internationalisation; in the imperative to attract and retain the best teaching staff; and in the need to re-vision our portfolio of course offerings, diversifying and ‘unbundling’ our offerings to better meet the diverse needs of our student cohorts.

Employers are increasingly demanding ‘work-ready’ graduates who demonstrate career capabilities and skills in addition to traditional graduate attributes. Our students want to be assured that their studies will provide return on investment and ensure personal growth and professional relevance. Producing employable graduates is now an integral aspect of university education. An explicit, coherent and integrated employability focus will enable La Trobe to attract and retain high quality students.

The third core objective is research. We value the teaching-research nexus and seek to ensure that teaching and research are placed on an equal footing in terms of recognition and reward. Both are vital aspects of the University’s success and must be valued and celebrated.

The University’s Strategic Plan 2018-2022 is supported by three enablers: these are One University Many Communities, Operational Excellence, and Revenue Growth. These enablers feed expression in the Learning and Teaching Plan in our recognition of the importance of La Trobe’s multi-campus character and drive towards internationalisation; in the imperative to attract and retain the best teaching staff; and in the need to re-vision our portfolio of course offerings, diversifying and ‘unbundling’ our offerings to better meet the diverse needs of our student cohorts.

Learning and teaching at La Trobe must also respond to the quality imperatives of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Higher Education Standards Framework. While this framework embeds quality assurance processes, La Trobe seeks to go beyond quality assurance to promote systematic, evidence-based quality enhancement across all aspects of the student lifecycle. The Plan should thus be read in conjunction with the new La Trobe Quality and Standards Framework, which places the student experience at its centre.

The quality of learning and teaching in La Trobe’s Colleges and Schools will be operationalised through this Plan. The first two years of the rolling implementation plan will be developed separately but should be read in the context of this Plan.
Our core objectives

La Trobe will deliver a consistently high quality student experience.

1. Student experience

La Trobe seeks to provide an excellent student experience across all aspects of the student lifecycle from the initial transition experience, through the academic experience, the students’ engagement with campus life more broadly, and the graduate experience. Its intention is to provide a high quality student experience across both curricular and co-curricular engagement, an experience based in La Trobe’s values (inclusiveness, diversity, equality and social justice, the pursuit of excellence, sustainability, community and willingness to innovate) and reflective of the cultural qualities of connectedness, innovation, accountability and care.

In ensuring an outstanding student experience, the University commits to partnering with its students over the next five years. It is no longer the case that universities can assume that they know what is good for students and what students want to achieve. Courses, subjects and services need to be informed by the student perspective. Student needs also require a ‘joined up’ approach to service provision.

La Trobe recognises that students are not interested in institutional organisational structures – rather, they want access to the support and services that they need, in a timely fashion, and provided with a strong customer service ethos.

At the same time, La Trobe recognises that the needs of students are changing. Its offerings must meet these needs. To this end, over the next five years, La Trobe will seek to engender learning that is lifelong and ‘lifewide’ (that is, offering learning opportunities to support individuals’ aspirations to realise their potential in the world of work, and more fully contribute in their relationships and communities). We will do this by diversifying and unbundling our course offerings; by meeting student needs for access and flexibility by means of diverse offerings, including executive education, short courses and micro-credentialing; as well as increasing student options through online offerings and other technologically-enhanced means of academic engagement.

La Trobe has set itself the target of being top 12 in Australia and top in Victoria for high quality student experience and learning outcomes as measured by student success, retention and completion rates for all students, and the Student Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaires.

1.1 Ensure a consistent approach to quality across all aspects of the student lifecycle, regardless of campus or location

- La Trobe will partner with its students to ensure quality across the student lifecycle and provide opportunities for students to partner in the co-design of curriculum and learning outcomes. To facilitate this, La Trobe will increase formal consultation mechanisms with students at University, College and School level and enhance opportunities for student feedback through a range of channels. The PVC Student Success will lead our efforts in student partnership, which are discussed in more detail in the Student Success and Retention Plan.

- La Trobe will prioritise evidence-based quality enhancement across all aspects of the student lifecycle. This will include Annual Course Monitoring to enable course teams to monitor and enhance academic quality in a systematic and timely way. We will continue to prioritise targeted, evidence-based enhancement initiatives to ensure the systematic improvement of teaching quality.

- La Trobe will undertake a stocktake of effective learning and teaching initiatives, disseminating and adopting good practice across the University.

- La Trobe will review and refresh its student evaluation survey framework to ensure that feedback provides a sound evidence base for subject and course innovation and renewal and is effective in ‘closing the loop’ with students.

- La Trobe will develop and enhance its capacity in learning analytics. Analytics assist teachers and support staff to improve current offerings. They enhance teaching effectiveness and efficiencies and inform supportive interventions to improve student outcomes. Over the life of the Plan, systems, processes and underlying architecture will be enhanced to enable La Trobe to focus on better developing learner analytics, that is, analytics designed to engage and enable students to self-regulate, to reflect on their feedback and to determine their learning goals.
1.2 Design an innovative academic program, including an online program, that is relevant and responsive to the needs of students, industry and the community and that prioritises academic support to improve the progression and completion rates of all students.

In the contemporary environment, change is inevitable and La Trobe recognises that it must continuously innovate, improve and be open to new ways of working. Over the life of the Learning and Teaching Plan, we will encourage ‘disruptive thinking’, utilise technology with purpose and will encourage ‘disruptive thinking’, the Learning and Teaching Plan, we will innovate, improve and be open to utilise technology with purpose and will encourage ‘disruptive thinking’, changing educational environment.

La Trobe will undertake a comprehensive course portfolio review and refresh over the next five years, making market-informed, evidence-based decisions at key points in the course lifecycle to ensure that our offerings respond to student and industry demands and address student need, such as greater flexibility and access. Future developments will build on the disciplinary knowledge and expertise of La Trobe academic staff, and the lessons learned from previous course transformations. We will proactively pursue new opportunities and course and subject rationalisation based on business intelligence. We will extend our educational reach to secure our future and enhance our income streams without sacrificing quality and reputation.

La Trobe will increase its online offerings over the life of the Plan. Online study gives students the flexibility to study wherever and whenever it is convenient. Online offerings provide access to a La Trobe education for students who could not otherwise be part of our learning community. Over the next five years, La Trobe will trial, evaluate and further develop a fully flexible, personalised range of offerings that allow our students to study entirely online or face to face, or to take some subjects online and others face to face, according to preference or need. We will also extend the reach of our online programs to the international learning community. Access and engagement with online offerings will be designed with changing technologies and user preferences in mind.

La Trobe will offer more alternatives to traditional award offerings. The reach of education has been extended by new technologies and the need to ‘upskill’ to ensure ongoing employability and career progression. Education should now be available across the lifespan, preparing individuals for new phases of life and new career challenges. It should not only be lifelong, but ‘lifewide’, offering learning opportunities to individuals as workers, citizens, family members, community members and individuals. To this end, La Trobe will ‘unbundle’ its offerings, where appropriate, to provide new opportunities, including short courses, executive and professional development.

1.3 Establish a staff engagement and development strategy to promote good practice and scholarly evidence-based course improvements, recognition and rewards, regardless of campus or location.

We noted earlier that an outstanding student academic experience is enabled by engaged and capable staff who put the learner at the centre of what they do. Such staff prioritise intellectually engaging and industry relevant academic programs to meet student needs. The Plan seeks to ensure an outstanding student experience through strategies aimed at attracting, retaining, supporting and developing outstanding staff, including our sessional staff. Priority will also be given to recognising and rewarding educational champions of change and improvement.

The La Trobe Teaching Excellence Principles will be embedded within the University. The Principles, which articulate La Trobe’s expectations of excellence, will guide best practice in academic engagement over the life of the Plan.

The Principles will underpin the successful recruitment, development, recognition and retention of academic staff at La Trobe.

La Trobe will review its professional development offerings for staff, to ensure a continued building of capability and development of new skills in response to contemporary student needs, regardless of campus or clinical location. New skills include, but are not limited to, the abilities to design and teach diverse offerings including short courses and executive education; to design and teach digitally enabled offerings, including wholly online offerings; to support learners with particular needs; and to analyse and draw inferences from learning data. This review will also investigate access and ease of navigation to online modules, as well as their update and effectiveness. LTLT will partner with the Colleges and Schools to create tailored and effective professional development opportunities.
La Trobe will further enhance staff capability by:
- improving the visibility of services that provide staff support and information;
- ensuring staff have quality professional development available where and when staff need that support.
- enhancing the digital and data literacy of our staff through targeted programs of staff development. La Trobe’s learning and teaching culture will embrace the La Trobe cultural qualities of accountability, innovation, care and connection.
- embedding inclusive teaching design and delivery across all its programs.

La Trobe will acknowledge and reward teaching excellence and innovation through the creation of the La Trobe Learning and Teaching Academy. Membership of the Academy will be at the invitation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), in recognition of teaching excellence. Academy Fellows will, in turn, provide learning and teaching leadership across the University and disseminate La Trobe excellence to the wider community. The Academy will facilitate collaboration to share good practice, promote innovation and creative problem solving within and across disciplines.

1.4 Embed principles of respect, safety and security across the La Trobe learning community
- La Trobe will provide tailored learning support for students at all campuses and modes of study. We will achieve this by supporting academic staff to design curriculum that scaffolds academic skills development and connects students to the services offered through the La Trobe Learning Hub and student advising network.
- La Trobe will embed inclusive teaching design and delivery across its programs and offerings. La Trobe will ensure our learning environment is safe, relevant, motivating and supportive for all students.
- La Trobe will embed cross- and inter-cultural skills in learning and teaching to support our staff and students to learn from, understand and experience different cultural contexts. This is essential to success in a global environment.

The Teaching Excellence Principles

The Teaching Excellence Principles

Learning and Teaching that engages, motivates and inspires students.
- A research informed approach to Learning and Teaching
- Teaching that addresses real world issues and enhances student employability
- Teaching that demonstrates best practice in curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment and feedback
- Teaching that takes a proactive approach to new learning and teaching strategies, methods and technologies
- Learning and Teaching that is based in the concepts of continuous improvement and critical reflection

Overall key performance indicators for a consistently high student experience

INDICATORS
1. School, course and subject performance as evidenced through Annual Course Review indicators.
2. Student satisfaction with the quality of experience at subject level (via Student Feedback on Subjects).
3. Student ratings on the Student Experience Survey (SES).
Producing work ready graduates is core business for La Trobe and improving graduate employability outcomes is a cornerstone of the University’s Strategic Plan.

2. Student employability

The Career Ready Advantage program is the cornerstone of our employability framework and La Trobe will build on this base to enhance the graduate outcomes through targeted approaches to embedding industry-relevant knowledge and employability skills into the curriculum. This aspect of the Learning and Teaching Plan should be read in conjunction with the Student Success and Retention Plan, where co-curricular support for graduate employability is considered.

2.1 Further embed employability in the curriculum

Over the next five years, La Trobe will ensure that employability is systematically embedded in the curriculum, to build on and supplement Career Ready and to ensure that students have the requisite skills and attributes to be work ready. Employability cannot be a piecemeal exercise. To this end,

- La Trobe will undertake a stocktake of effective student employability practices and outcomes to date, disseminating and adopting good practice across the University.
- La Trobe will refresh the Essentials and the Graduate Capabilities statements and ensure the Graduate Capabilities and the Career Ready Capabilities are consistent. To this end, the University will partner with industry and alumni to ensure the Capabilities are industry-relevant and reflect contemporary global workforce needs.
- La Trobe will embed employability skills development into every course. In partnership, we will develop the La Trobe Employability Curriculum Framework, and provide support to academic staff to ensure that the renewed graduate capabilities and opportunities to develop student employability are embedded in all undergraduate and postgraduate courses across the University.
- La Trobe will expand opportunities for students to engage in work-based learning. The University will broaden our current definition of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) to include the range of work-based experiences open to our students, including project based, volunteer, flexible and virtual experiences.
- La Trobe will identify and respond to emerging skills gaps in the contemporary workplace by such means as ‘topping up’ standard university qualifications with short cycle qualifications and micro-credentialing. We will ensure our graduates develop transferrable skills and are well prepared for career changes over the term of their working lives, and able to adapt to careers that might not yet exist.

2.2 Further develop staff capability for embedding employability in the curriculum

- La Trobe will enhance staff capability for teaching and integrating employability by developing a program of targeted staff development. This will enable the integration of employability capabilities in the curriculum, building on existing good practice in work integrated learning (WIL).

Overall key performance indicator for student employability

INDICATOR

1. Performance on the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS).
3. Research

The Plan seeks to ensure that research and teaching are equally valued as complementary activities. The relationship between teaching and research is vital to the success of the University, but it is often assumed, or overlooked. There are many linkages, however: effective teaching is enriched by high quality disciplinary research; the scholarship of learning and teaching can inform and enhance teaching practice and policy; and teaching can enrich an academic’s research. The Teaching Excellence Principles explicitly acknowledge and value the teaching research nexus in the principles of rigour and reflection. As Hattie and Marsh (2004) have observed, the evidence of the nexus between teaching and research ‘should be robust, acted upon, and esteemed’.

3.1 Enhance La Trobe’s recognition of creativity, commitment, inquiry, and critical analysis in both teaching and research, placing particular value on situations where these occur across both domains

- La Trobe will ensure that its processes of selection, retention, promotion and reward, value learning and teaching and research in equal measure.

We will reward creativity, commitment, inquiry, and critical analysis in both teaching and research, placing particular value on situations where these occur across both domains. La Trobe will also ensure its professional development is evidence-based, and that academics are guided on how to improve their practice based on feedback.

3.2 Foster research-informed teaching

- The teaching-research nexus will be valued in learning, in particular, in relation to ‘students’ knowledge of current research, demonstrations of the research processes in the area, a demonstration of and commitment to the principles of research enquiry, and an eagerness to (re-)search for more understanding of the area’ (Hattie and Marsh, 2004).

We value the teaching-research nexus, and will ensure evidence of it is robust, acted upon, and esteemed.
Over recent years, there has been increasing emphasis on the importance of university partnerships and collaborations designed to increase engagement with industry and community. Barnett (2018) contends that the university’s complexity and interconnections with the broader world have relevance in seven particular ‘ecosystems’ – knowledge, social institutions, persons, the economy, learning, culture and the natural environment. While the university’s role might differ between these ecosystems, it has a responsibility to ‘work out its own possibilities in promoting [their] wellbeing’ (page 9).

From a learning and teaching perspective, it is vital for our student experience and for graduate employability that La Trobe develops and sustains productive educational, research, alumni, industry and community partnerships. Importantly, we must also partner with our sessional staff to ensure that we benefit from their skills and expertise to foster an outstanding student experience.

La Trobe’s partnerships are designed to bring benefit to all parties: the University benefits in many ways, including enhanced opportunities for students. Our partners benefit from access to our innovation and research, as well as engaging with our outstanding students. La Trobe’s partnerships, increasingly, are global, multidisciplinary and collaborative and must be characterised by clarity of purpose, transparency, accountability, good communications and a sense of community (La Trobe University Partner of Choice Governance Framework: Guidance for La Trobe Personnel, p.10).

Our global educational partnerships with international universities and networks improve the student experience, provide valuable career opportunities for both staff and students, and contribute to innovation in both teaching and research.

Most importantly, as noted earlier, from the perspective of the Learning and Teaching Plan, La Trobe must partner with our students to ensure an outstanding student experience, student success and student employability. Opportunities for students, and employers, to participate in the co-design of modes, content and outcomes of student learning will be created.

Industry may engage with curriculum development at differing degrees of intensity: from potential employers serving on Course Advisory Committees; to partnerships between the University and industry to create customised executive education and professional development; to direct engagement of industry members as adjuncts and professors of practice. Over the life of the Plan, La Trobe will enhance all these avenues for industry participation in curriculum development.

Our curricula and assessments will be designed or re-designed in collaborative partnership with our students, potential employers, alumni and relevant professional bodies to ensure relevance and currency.

4. Unrivalled partner of choice

4.1 Develop an industry-informed curriculum

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4.2 Continue to innovate through partnerships

Partnerships have been a source of rapid growth within La Trobe’s program portfolio. TAFE partnerships, in particular, provide improved access to tertiary education for participants. Over the life of the Plan, La Trobe will implement its Coursework Partnerships Strategy to ensure its partnerships are successful and meet its quality standards. We will also innovate through industry partnerships for technology-enhanced learning.

4. Overall key performance indicator for unrivalled partner of choice

INDICATOR

1. Double partnership revenue from research and education by 2022.
Looking ahead to 2022

By 2022, La Trobe will have a thriving learning and teaching community founded on the La Trobe Teaching Excellence Principles. Effectiveness in learning and teaching will be valued and rewarded in equal measure with research. Our students will have an outstanding learning experience, and be engaged, active and responsible learners. Our staff will be passionate, engaged, knowledgeable and supported in their work. We will be known for our thought leadership and innovation in learning and teaching.

References


Learning and Teaching Framework

The following associated La Trobe strategy documentation and plans should be read in conjunction with the Learning and Teaching Plan 2018-2022:

- La Trobe Strategic Plan 2018-2022
- La Trobe Teaching Excellence Principles
- Student Success and Retention Plan
- Indigenous Education Strategy
- Globalisation Plan 2018-2022
- Graduate Capability Framework
- The La Trobe Academic
- Strategic Partnership Framework.

A two year rolling implementation plan will follow on from this Learning and Teaching Plan.
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