

The background of the page features a photograph of a building's corner. The building is light-colored, possibly concrete or stone, and has large, dark letters spelling 'UT' on its facade. The sky is a clear, light blue. The text is overlaid on this image.

Protocols: Orientation and transition

*Protocols to accompany the policy for
First Year Experience and retention
(Manual of Policy and Procedures C/6.2)*

October, 2012

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Versions	Date	Updates
Version 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original version to accompany revised policy
Version 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaced references to OTQ with LTU
Version 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated version to accompany revised policy



1. First Year Experience

QUT is committed to delivering a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach to our commencing students' First Year Experience (FYE) and to supporting all commencing students to adjust successfully to study at QUT by providing a strong transition experience — academically, socially and administratively (see MOPP [C/6.2](#) – First Year Experience and retention).

2. Learning transitions

'Orientation' is differently conceptualised for different commencing student cohorts. For example, where learning transitions are relatively minor in their impact (e.g. where pedagogical scaffolding is provided in the transition from one unit to another in a coherent course of study), 'orientation' may properly fall within the scope of policies for curriculum design (see MOPP [C/4.2](#) – Curriculum Design). However, where learning transitions involve large-scale, multi-faceted academic, social, and environmental change (for example, secondary school to university; undergraduate to postgraduate), 'orientation' will typically be delivered over a longer period. In this case, the transition process begins with recruitment and admissions and extends from enrolment through to at least the first four weeks of first semester and is embedded in the first year curriculum.

3. Orientation

QUT recognises that every educational transition involves an adjustment process for the commencing student as a new learner in a discipline. QUT's orientation aims to ensure that all commencing students are supported through these transitions according to their needs.

Student orientation is a process of academic, social, administrative and geographic familiarisation with, and adaptation to study at, QUT. The orientation process aims to address and manage students' expectations and needs, and the diversity of their preparedness to cope with their new learning environments on the one hand, and their course and our institution on the other. The student orientation process occurs over time (from the letter of offer through to Week 4 of first semester) and is also embedded in curriculum, and is achieved through:

- a focus on critical time periods such as Orientation Weeks ('O Weeks')
- an integrated and coherent set of institutional activities, processes and practices that introduce and familiarise commencing students (and their families and significant others as appropriate) to QUT environments
- a process of academic and social integration to facilitate learning engagement
- just-in-time information provision and timely access to support services.

3.1 Students

The focus for orientation is on students who have not previously studied at QUT, or have not previously studied the course in which they are currently enrolled at QUT, or have not previously attended the particular QUT campus at which they are about to commence.

QUT particularly acknowledges and seeks to support the orientation needs of diverse cohorts of commencing students and is mindful that different cohorts have different transition needs, for example, by reason of:

- their membership of recognised groups (such as membership of equity or 'at-risk' groups; as Indigenous, international, mature age or first generation students)
- their membership of special programs (such as Start QUT, Elite Athlete Program, scholarship programs for high achieving students)
- the type and/or timing of their interaction with QUT (such as mode of study, including distance and double degrees; course level; change of campus or course; mid-year entry; advanced standing; re-enrolling students).

Orientation will be enacted in accordance with the roles and responsibilities for the management of orientation and transition set out in this document.

4. Objectives of orientation

The objectives of orientation are:

1. To *engage commencing students in their learning experiences* by:
 - providing the foundation for students to become successful learners in higher education
 - facilitating the acquisition and development of basic skills and knowledge necessary for the commencement of university study
 - recognising and taking into account students' diverse backgrounds, abilities and expectations
 - alleviating commencing students' uncertainty about course and/or vocational choice as early as possible
 - promoting a clear understanding of why they are doing their units and courses and how their units and courses are purposefully connected and sequenced and relevant to career attainment
 - promoting a broad but clear understanding of the aims and objectives, learning outcomes, aligned teaching, learning and assessment approaches, assessment methods, and teaching and learning methods of their first semester units and overall course.
2. To facilitate commencing students' *timely access to support services* by:
 - ensuring that information provision is limited to what is immediately relevant at each stage of the orientation process
 - promoting awareness of the breadth and availability of QUT's student support services especially at critical points in the orientation process
 - either supporting students to stay on in their units and courses or informing and facilitating their decision to study in different units and courses wherever possible.

3. To develop commencing students' *sense of belonging to QUT* and their discipline(s) of study by:
 - introducing them to their geographical environment
 - facilitating their interactions with QUT's administrative environment
 - explaining academic culture and expectations
 - promoting involvement in university life, including engagement with peers and QUT staff
 - supporting social transition.

5. 'O Weeks'

'O Weeks' are an integral part of the transition process for all commencing students — academically, socially, administratively and geographically. O Weeks provide opportunities for students to become familiar with QUT services and facilities, to attend introductory sessions to their course of study, to participate in skill development and information programs, and to interact socially and academically with other students and QUT staff.

O Weeks are recognised as the official commencement to the academic year for QUT commencing students and, for most commencing students, will normally be scheduled over specific days in the weeks immediately preceding Week 1 of the standard teaching semester. Certain cohorts of commencing students (for example, international, Indigenous, mature aged, targeted equity groups) may be required to participate in orientation activities prior to O Week.

O Weeks are designed to reach all commencing students and are considered compulsory for all commencing students to participate in their relevant course-specific activities (academic and social) scheduled during those weeks. Additional orientation activities may be required for particular cohorts of students.

Where possible, the University is committed to supporting commencing students who are unable to attend Orientation through employing key retention strategies (such as monitoring student engagement and peer programs), though this is not to be seen as a replacement of the course specific orientation event. Commencing students are encouraged to attend non-compulsory orientation activities, which provide opportunities to further social and academic integration.

6. QUT orientation good practice principles

1. Orientation is a process, not an event. Specifically, the first year curriculum shall be intentionally designed to mediate orientation and transition as a process that occurs over time.
2. QUT's approach to and communication about orientation will be coherent, comprehensive, integrated and coordinated.
3. The academic, social, administrative and geographic integration of commencing students into QUT is a shared priority for all staff during the orientation process.
4. Orientation activities shall provide timely and easy access to course advising, services and programs that aid academic, administrative and social transition, integration and support.

5. Information provision shall be limited to that which is immediately relevant to each stage of the orientation process.
6. Orientation activities shall maximise opportunities for cohort development by facilitating social interaction between commencing students and their peers and informal interaction between commencing students and academic and administrative staff.
7. Orientation activities shall be evidence-based and enhanced by regular evaluation.

7. Roles and responsibilities for the management of orientation at QUT

QUT academic and professional staff, working in partnership, are required to be available to and accessible by students over critical orientation time periods to facilitate student orientation and to provide necessary course and administrative advice and information.

7.1 Orientation Organising Committee

The Orientation Organising Committee is responsible for the coordination of a University-wide approach to orientation, including the coordination of O Weeks, in accordance with QUT's orientation good practice principles. The Committee, in partnership with the Student Guild, is responsible for the development of a broad-based, inclusive, social program of campus-based events for orientation.

The members of this committee are the officers responsible for implementation in faculties, divisions and campuses.

7.2 The First Year Experience and Retention Committee / The Student Experience Management Committee

The First Year Experience and Retention Committee and the Student Experience Management Committee (as appropriate) are responsible for elements that fall within their current Terms of Reference regarding Orientation. Each Committee, as required, will consider twice yearly reports from the Orientation Organising Committee on:

- support activities that are embedded throughout the entire semester;
- evaluation of orientation activities; and,
- plans for improvement of retention strategies from the point of offer to the successful completion of 96 credit points of study.

7.3 Faculties, divisions and campuses

Faculties, divisions and campuses, together with the Student Guild, are responsible for the following:

- developing their own Orientation Plan that includes strategies to address transition issues relevant to their particular commencing student cohorts (such as undergraduate, postgraduate, external, mid-year, double degree, particularly 'at risk' groups) and appropriate resourcing and staff allocation to manage the orientation needs of commencing students, especially over critical time periods

(such as immediately after the main offer round, for O Weeks, first week of semester, pre-census)

- reporting to the First Year Experience and Retention Committee and the Student Experience Management Committee (as appropriate) twice a year (in May and September) on activities undertaken, evaluation of activities and plans for improvement
- coordinating orientation and O Week activities: campuses, in partnership with the Division of Administrative Services (DAS), coordinate campus-based activities; and faculties coordinate discipline-based activities, particularly addressing the needs of double-degree students.
- determining the scheduling of information sessions and/or activities, processes and practices aimed specifically at commencing students
- ensuring that room booking requests for O Weeks have priority over other proposed activity requests wherever possible.

In addition, faculties are responsible for:

- developing course processes and administrative procedures for the early identification, monitoring and support of commencing students who are at risk of disengaging or not fully achieving desired learning outcomes over their first semester of study
- assessing and planning for the orientation implications of all new and existing courses, including all double degree courses, during the curriculum development and approval processes (see MOPP C/4.1.4 – Curriculum development and approval), and monitoring for efficacy through the annual course reporting cycle (see MOPP C/4.6.3 – Course quality assurance process).

7.4 Academic Leadership Roles

Designated academic leadership roles as outlined in policy (see MOPP [B/3.5](#)) are responsible for developing course specific orientation activities before the start of semester and during O Week. At a minimum, these activities should:

- provide an overview of the course
- address expectations of commencing students and academic staff for the first period of the first semester
- introduce student rights and responsibilities
- emphasise the availability of support services
- emphasise the availability of mentoring by experienced students
- provide a relevant (local) geographical tour
- emphasise opportunities to develop student–student relationships and staff–student relationships.