

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

STRATEGY



the university for the real world[®]



QUT acknowledges the Turrbal and Yugara as the First Nations owners of the lands where QUT now stands. We pay respect to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning. QUT acknowledges the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within the QUT community.

Foreword

I am delighted to present this comprehensive strategy that celebrates and builds on our university's current strengths to create a thriving QUT community.

Writing a health and wellbeing strategy in 2022 is a challenging task—one that requires balancing hope for the future with pragmatic realism. We face increasing mental health and wellbeing challenges in universities following the COVID-19 pandemic, budget cuts, organisational restructuring, and catastrophic bushfires and flooding. We must acknowledge the difficulties we've navigated in our recent history and the subsequent depletion of our psychological flexibility and emotional resilience. To develop a health and wellbeing strategy that meets our community's needs, organisational requirements and the collective moment, we turned to QUT students and staff for insights, challenges and ideas on how to create a thriving community. This local context was aligned with international and national research-based practice on improving the health and wellbeing of university students and staff.

The Strategy is rightly ambitious, aiming to embed health and wellbeing into all aspects of life at QUT. The Strategy calls on the whole university to realise this aim, moving beyond a sole focus on individually targeted interventions and instead to enhance health and wellbeing through leadership practices, physical and digital environments, working and learning spaces, and policies and processes.

Together, we can build a healthy university community in which to work, learn and thrive.

Ms Leanne Harvey

Vice-President (Administration)
and University Registrar



The QUT *Health and Wellbeing Strategy* was developed collaboratively with students and staff from all corners of the QUT community to shape a future in which we can all thrive. We are so very grateful for all the ideas, advice, concerns, successes and creativity shared so openly and generously with us—the health and wellbeing project team. This strategy has well and truly been developed by the community it aims to serve.

The QUT Health and Wellbeing Strategy

QUT aspires to create a better world by being socially responsible and demonstrating care for students, staff, society and the First Nations' lands and seas on which we learn and work (the QUT Curriculum Development Project goals and *Campus to Country: Positioning Strategy*).

The QUT *Health and Wellbeing Strategy* (the Strategy) articulates the ways in which the university enables students and staff to be innovative, connected, resilient, values-driven people who contribute to a thriving world. Acknowledging the foundational role health and wellbeing plays in enabling these qualities, QUT has identified health and wellbeing as one of five strategic priorities in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Why this strategy is important

Recent years have seen an acceleration of a global downward trend in individuals' mental health and wellbeing. Accordingly, the profile of health and wellbeing—and the role organisations play in protecting, supporting and promoting it—has increased.

Local and international trends show that:

- university students experience poorer mental health than other comparative Australians, including higher rates of psychological distress and anxiety, and lower rates of wellbeing
- university staff experience higher levels of burnout and stress—and lower levels of wellbeing—than the general population

- low levels of wellbeing impact both student and staff retention and success, decreases student academic performance and reduces work productivity. On the other hand, positive wellbeing is associated with enhanced cognitive and psychological functioning, creativity, productivity, engagement, retention and satisfaction with life.

How this strategy was developed

The Strategy was developed in consultation with more than 300 university stakeholders including professional and academic staff, senior leaders and undergraduate and postgraduate students.

A draft strategy was made available to all QUT students and staff for feedback, which was incorporated into the final Strategy.

'Wellbeing does not consist of maximising positive experiences and minimising negative ones, but refers instead to living fully, allowing for the richest possible human potential.'

Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008



Key features of the strategy

Our vision is that health and wellbeing is central to all aspects of QUT life—enabling students and staff to thrive and succeed to their best potential.

Health Promoting University approach:

Our Strategy adopts the evidence-based and internationally recognised Health Promoting University approach which embeds health and wellbeing into all aspects of university life. It recognises that while it is vital to build the capacity of individuals to be healthy, there are social, physical, organisational, political and cultural factors at university that also need to be addressed to enhance health and wellbeing.

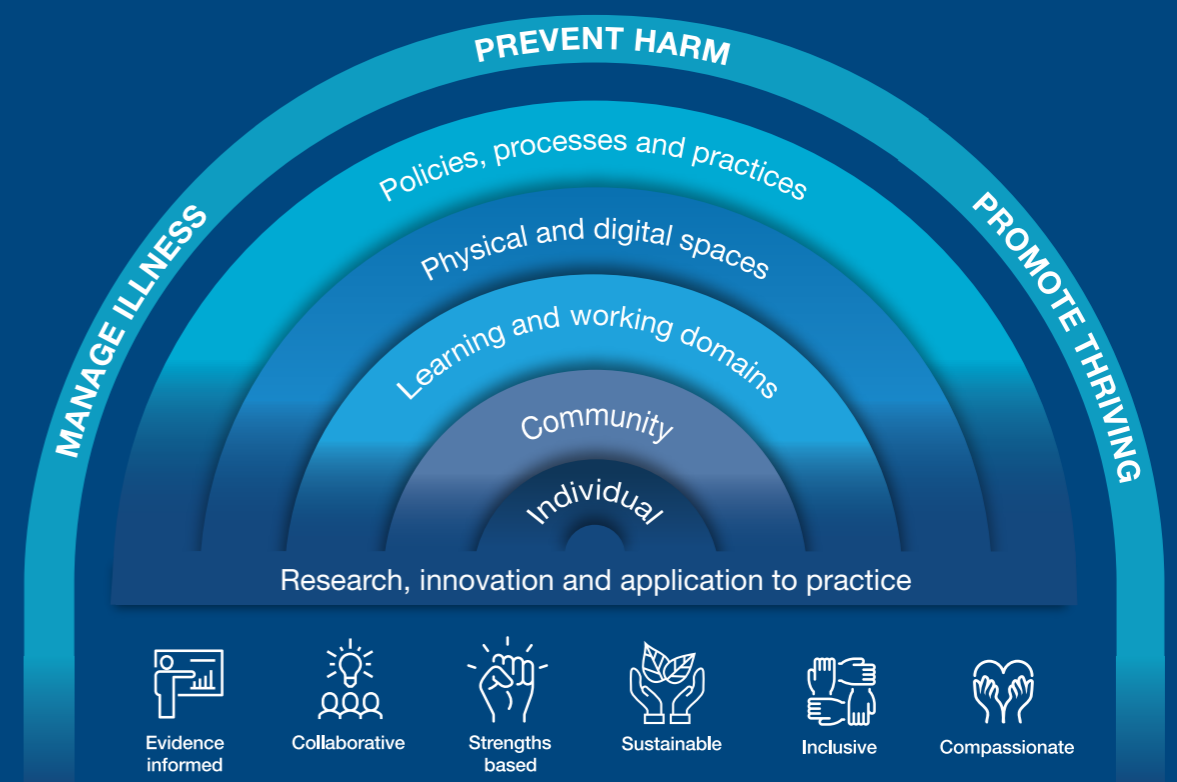
Scope: This Strategy addresses the full spectrum of health and wellbeing—from managing illness, to preventing harm to promoting thriving. Our approach considers both student and staff health and wellbeing simultaneously as they are acknowledged as inextricably linked.

Focus areas: Eight focus areas shape our Health Promoting University approach. The focus areas encourage collective action from students and staff across the university so that health and wellbeing is not simply the responsibility of an individual, a particular team, division or leader, but is instead 'everybody's business'.

Mental health and wellbeing: Due to rising trends in poor mental health and feedback from our community, the Strategy prioritises mental health and wellbeing.

Guiding principles: All QUT health and wellbeing activities will align with six underlying principles.

The QUT Health Promoting University Framework



Focus areas:

- 1 Individual: knowledge, skill development and service delivery
- 2 Community: relationships and culture
- 3 Learning domain
- 4 Working domain
- 5 Physical spaces
- 6 Digital spaces
- 7 Policies, processes and practices
- 8 Research, innovation and application to practice

Focus areas and objectives

No.	Focus area	Objectives <i>QUT will do this by:</i>
1	<p>Individual: knowledge, skill development and service delivery</p> <p>QUT aims to provide equitable, accessible, culturally responsive and cohesive health and wellbeing education and services to students and staff to promote health and wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enabling students and staff to develop confidence and ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify, develop and maintain positive mental health and healthy behaviours recognise and respond appropriately and compassionately to people in distress identifying and responding to the health and wellbeing needs of specific student and staff cohorts to provide a range of diverse and inclusive wellbeing development opportunities supporting collaboration, coordination and alignment of health and wellbeing services across divisions, faculties and student groups enhancing visibility, accessibility and awareness of health and wellbeing resources, initiatives and services.
2	<p>Community: relationships and culture</p> <p>QUT aims to proactively maintain an inviting, thriving, connected and inclusive community that fosters care, compassion and a strong sense of belonging.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> embedding care, compassion and safe language into QUT culture, communications, practices and leadership celebrating diversity and inclusion, and preventing and addressing marginalisation, discrimination, racism and harassment actively and systematically fostering social interaction, connectedness and sense of belonging.
3	<p>Learning domain</p> <p>QUT aims for health and wellbeing to be recognised as vital contributors to academic achievement, success and retention, and integrated in teaching practices, course design and learning cultures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> including wellbeing elements in course and curriculum design and teaching practices ensuring that assessment design enables wellbeing: stretches and tests learning without imposing unnecessary stress preparing students to develop the skills they need to thrive in learning, life and career enabling learning and teaching staff to appropriately support student mental health, understanding clear, supportive and appropriate boundaries co-developing and implementing situated initiatives for supporting student wellbeing at the program/school level, particularly for student cohorts identified as being at higher risk.
4	<p>Working domain</p> <p>QUT aims for health and wellbeing to be recognised as vital contributors to engagement, productivity, creativity and retention of staff at QUT, and embedded in leadership practices, job design and workplace culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing supportive and psychologically safe environments to enable staff to innovate, identify improvements and raise concerns about culture and practice that may impact on mental health equipping leaders, managers, and supervisors with the knowledge, skills and confidence to promote wellbeing within their teams and respond appropriately to staff concerns ensuring staff feel able to discuss personal mental health and wellbeing without stigma and have access to effective, accessible support and proactive interventions to help them improve their own mental health and wellbeing controlling for psychosocial hazards in job design supporting staff to spend a significant proportion of their time on work that is valued, meaningful to them and appropriate to their role.

No.	Focus area	Objectives <i>QUT will do this by:</i>
5	<p>Physical spaces</p> <p>QUT aims for campuses and facilities that are vibrant, inclusive spaces that protect and promote health and wellbeing, enabling a deep sense of belonging and connection with the land and people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> embedding health, wellbeing and accessibility within the design of physical spaces actively encouraging students and staff to maximise use of physical spaces to support thriving providing equitable access to campus facilities for students and staff designing and allocating physical spaces to appropriately support effective working, learning and social activities ensuring that wayfinding is clear and navigating the campus is easy for all.
6	<p>Digital spaces</p> <p>QUT aims for innovative digital solutions that allow safe and innovative practice in learning, teaching, service delivery and communication, and ensures digital environments are strongly inclusive, promote respectful interactions and meet people's daily needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring digital environments for students and staff are safe and accessible using digital spaces to foster community and sense of belonging supporting students and staff to manage their online presence, digital consumption, and distraction building the capacity of the QUT digital ecosystem to allow online delivery and personalisation of services, more efficient processes and best practice remote learning and working.
7	<p>Policies, processes and practices</p> <p>QUT aims for health and wellbeing to be embedded in all policies, processes, practices and decision making across the institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> working in partnership with students and staff to ensure health and wellbeing are evident in strategies, policies, procedures and practices continually assessing the impact of university policies and processes on student and staff health and wellbeing providing visible leadership and commitment to health and wellbeing across the entire organisation measuring, monitoring and publishing health and wellbeing data to ensure continuous improvement.
8	<p>Research, innovation and application to practice</p> <p>QUT aims to be a leading institution for the rapid translation of health and wellbeing research to serve its own 'real world' community and contribute to global knowledge production in this field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that health and wellbeing initiatives are robustly evidence informed in planning, development, implementation and consistent evaluation ensuring collaboration between researchers and practitioners to allow the rapid translation of research into practice supporting and sharing research that examines the effectiveness of health-promoting university initiatives.

Implementation and reporting

Implementation of the Strategy requires establishing a governance structure, co-developing action plans for each of the eight focus areas; determining priorities, building capacity of teams and individuals across QUT, promoting and advocating for health and wellbeing, and reviewing and reporting on progress against objectives. This requires support from senior leadership and collaborative action from stakeholders across the university.

The Strategy both supports and is supported by a range of existing QUT strategies and action plans. These interdependencies reveal the Strategy's strong alignment and contribution to existing objectives of the university. Health and wellbeing action plans will include explicit alignment with existing plans as detailed in the table above.

Progress against objectives will be reviewed annually as part of the QUT planning cycle and the Strategy will undergo a review every two years to respond to new evidence, emerging practice and changing policy conditions.



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QUT Media

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Version 3

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