Acknowledgements

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived in their territories for millennia and have deep understandings of the importance of wellbeing and its connection to all aspects of life. In recognition of this knowledge and because our Gardens Point and Kelvin Grove campuses are located on traditional territories, we will continue to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in pursuit of greater wellbeing at QUT and in their communities.

QUT’s 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.
Foreword

I am delighted to present this comprehensive strategy that celebrates and builds on QUT’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, work and learning spaces, and policies and processes. Together, we can build a healthy campus community in which to work, learn and thrive.

Ms Leanne Harvey
Vice President (Administration) and University Registrar
QUT’s Health and Wellbeing 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.

QUT’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy articulates how the University enables students and staff to be innovative, connected, resilient, value-driven people that contribute to a thriving world. Acknowledging the foundational role health and wellbeing play in enabling these qualities, QUT has identified health and wellbeing as one of six strategic priorities, in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

WHY THE 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 stress, and lower levels of wellbeing, than the general population.
- Low levels of wellbeing impacts both student and staff retention and success, decreases student academic performance and reduces work productivity. Positive wellbeing on the other hand, is associated with enhanced cognitive and psychological functioning, creativity, productivity, engagement, retention, and satisfaction with life.

HOW THE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The Strategy was developed in consultation with over 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.

“Universities need to see mental health and wellbeing as foundational to all aspects of university life, for all students and all staff.”

– Stepchange Mentally Healthy Universities Framework, 2021
QUT’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy

**KEY FEATURES OF QUT’S HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY**

**Health Promoting University approach:** Our Strategy adopts the evidenced 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 QUT’s 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.
# Focus Areas and Objectives

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<th>FOCUS AREA</th>
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| **FOCUS AREA 1.**  
Individual: Knowledge, skill development, and service delivery. | QUT will do this by:  
1.1. Enabling students and staff to develop confidence and ability to:  
   - Identify, develop and maintain positive mental health and healthy behaviours.  
   - Recognise and respond appropriately and compassionately to people in distress.  
1.2. 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.  
1.3. Supporting collaboration, coordination and alignment of health and wellbeing services across divisions, faculties and student groups.  
1.4. Enhancing visibility, accessibility and awareness of health and wellbeing resources, initiatives and services. |
| **FOCUS AREA 2.**  
Community: Relationships and culture. | QUT will do this by:  
2.1. Embedding care, compassion and safe language into QUT’s culture, communications, practices and leadership.  
2.2. Celebrating diversity and inclusion, preventing and addressing marginalisation, discrimination, racism and harassment.  
2.3. Actively and systematically fostering social interaction, connectedness and sense of belonging. |
| **FOCUS AREA 3.**  
Learning domain | QUT will do this by:  
3.1. Including wellbeing elements in course and curriculum design and teaching practices.  
3.2. Ensuring that assessment design enables wellbeing: stretches and tests learning without imposing unnecessary stress.  
3.3. Preparing students to develop the skills they need to thrive in learning, life and career.  
3.4. Enabling learning and teaching staff to appropriately support student mental health, understanding clear, supportive, and appropriate boundaries.  
3.5. 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. |
| **FOCUS AREA 4.**  
Working domain | QUT will do this by:  
4.1. 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.  
4.2. Equipping leaders, managers, and supervisors with the knowledge, skills and confidence to promote wellbeing within their teams and respond appropriately to staff concerns.  
4.3. 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.  
4.4. Controlling for psychosocial hazards in job design.  
4.5. Supporting staff to spend a significant proportion of their time on work that is valued, meaningful to them and appropriate to their role. |

QUT aims to provides equitable, accessible, culturally responsive, and cohesive health and wellbeing education and services to students and staff to promote health and wellbeing.

QUT aims to proactively maintain an inviting, thriving, connected, and inclusive community that fosters care, compassion and a strong sense of belonging.

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.

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.
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| **FOCUS AREA 6.**  
Digital Spaces  
QUT aims for innovative digital solutions that allow safe and innovative practice in learning, teaching, service delivery and communication and ensure digital environments are strongly inclusive, promote respectful interactions and meet people’s daily needs. | 6.1. Ensuring digital environments for students and staff are safe and accessible.  
6.2. Using digital spaces to foster community and sense of belonging.  
6.3. Supporting students and staff to manage their online presence, digital consumption, and distraction.  
6.4. Building the capacity of QUT’s digital ecosystem to allow online delivery and personalisation of services, more efficient processes and best practice remote learning and working. |
| **FOCUS AREA 7.**  
Policies, processes and practices  
QUT aims for health and wellbeing to be embedded in all policies, processes, practices and decision making across the institution. | 7.1. Working in partnership with students and staff to ensure health and wellbeing are evident in strategies, policies, procedures and practices.  
7.2. Continually assessing the impact of university policies and processes on student and staff health and wellbeing.  
7.3. Providing visible leadership and commitment to health and wellbeing across the entire organisation.  
7.4 Measuring, monitoring and publishing health and wellbeing data to ensure continuous improvement |
| **FOCUS AREA 8.**  
Research, innovation and application to practice  
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. | 8.1. Ensuring that health and wellbeing initiatives are robustly evidence informed in planning, development, implementation and consistent evaluation.  
8.2 Ensuring collaboration between researchers and practitioners to allow the rapid translation of research into practice.  
8.3. 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 focus area; determining priorities; building capacity of teams and individuals across QUT; promotion and advocacy of 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. Internal expertise will be leveraged in the implementation of the strategy.

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