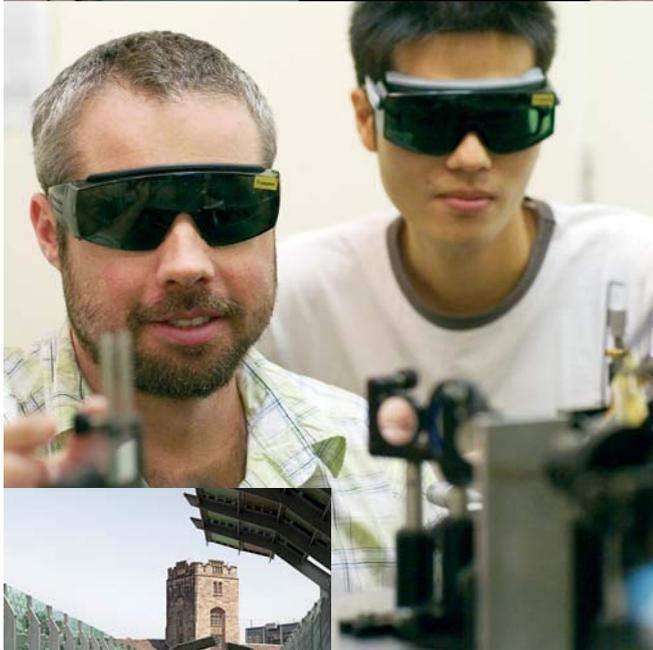


# THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY 2011–2015 STRATEGIC PLAN



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY



# THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY 2011–2015 STRATEGIC PLAN CONTENTS

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*Opposite: Sunset over the University's Front Lawn and south wing of the Quadrangle.*

*Cover images:*

*Top: Adrienne Keane, a PhD student at the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, who is conducting research into people's attitudes to living among World Heritage listed areas.*

*Middle: Professor Ben Eggleton, who will be the director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Ultrahigh Bandwidth Devices for Optical Systems, a world-leading research centre to create technology that will revolutionise information systems, create and develop Australian industry, and train and mentor young researchers in the science and application of nanophotonics and photonic processing.*

*Bottom: Staff and students cross the City Road footbridge, built in 2008 to improve links across the Camperdown/Darlington Campus.*



## INTRODUCTION

The Green Paper *The University of Sydney 2011–2015* outlined both the external and internal challenges that we face in maintaining our current position in an increasingly competitive global education sector. This Strategic Plan defines the 17 key strategies that we have identified as fundamental in responding to these challenges.

The strategies, and initiatives that support them, draw upon every area of our work. They have been developed in collaboration with staff and students from across the University and will continue to take form as we align our faculty and divisional plans to this University-wide blueprint.

We are confident that the strategies outlined in this plan are vital to building upon the work of this great University, and that implementing them through a consistent program of collective planning, decision-making and management will be important to ensuring our ongoing academic strength and international competitiveness into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Spence', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

**Michael Spence**  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

For more information on the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 visit [sydney.edu.au/strategy](http://sydney.edu.au/strategy)



# OUR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND VALUES

We aim to create and sustain a university in which, for the benefit of both Australia and the wider world, the brightest researchers and the most promising students, whatever their social or cultural background, can thrive and realise their full potential.

In pursuing this purpose, the University community shares two key values. These are values to which people repeatedly returned in the consultation process for this Strategic Plan. They run like a thread through all of the strategies included here. They will serve to guide our activities during the planning period:

## ENGAGED ENQUIRY

The University is a place of enquiry. It is a place in which the skills of critical thinking are sharpened and exercised. There are three senses in which our enquiry is 'engaged'. First, we hold education and research together. There should be a seamlessness in the learning of our students and researchers as they work to sharpen their skills in critical thinking and analysis to advance knowledge and understanding. Second, while building on the traditional disciplines, we bring them together to solve complex problems in cross-disciplinary education and research. Third, the work of our University is engaged with the communities of which we are a part, both in Australia and overseas.

## MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Individual members of the University, and the academic communities of which they are a part, are accountable to one another for their contribution to the academic and financial health of the institution. This concept of mutual accountability shapes the University's commitment to, and the responsibilities of, individual staff and students. It also has implications for our approach to decision-making, and for the relationship of the various academic communities that constitute the University.

These values shape our aspirations: they determine both what we seek to achieve and how we seek to achieve it. With our statement of purpose they constitute a test of the extent to which our various initiatives do, or do not, meet our strategic directions.



**MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY:**  
UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE AND THE SIZE  
AND SHAPE OF THE UNIVERSITY

## STRATEGY ONE: REFINE OUR GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Our vision is of an institution where groups of academic communities hold one another both academically and financially accountable, and develop coordinated strategies to achieve the University's strategic purpose. This requires effective structures for institutional governance and collective decision-making.

### Initiatives

- 1(a) Create new divisional boards as committees of SEG to bring faculties together in a relationship of mutual accountability. These divisional boards will be comprised as follows: Arts, Law, Education and Social Work; Science, Veterinary Science, Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Pharmacy; Architecture, Design and Planning, Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney Conservatorium of Music; Economics and Business; Engineering and Information Technologies; Health Sciences.
- 1(b) Agree with each of the Deans of the faculties and with SEG the membership, terms of reference and rules for the conduct of the business of the divisional boards.
- 1(c) Charge the divisional boards with the task of overseeing the development of faculty strategic plans and developing a strategic plan for the division as a whole.
- 1(d) Restructure SEG to better represent the scale of University activity within the divisions.
- 1(e) Reform the subcommittees of SEG to reflect the full range of responsibilities of the reconstituted SEG.
- 1(f) Transfer the Discipline of Economics from the Faculty of Economics and Business to the Faculty of Arts, creating a new School of Economics within that faculty and renaming the Faculty of Arts as the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Economics and Business as the School of Business (with the status of a faculty).
- 1(g) Transfer the Graduate School of Government and the Centre for International Security Studies from the Faculty of Economics and Business to the Faculty of Arts.
- 1(h) Determine the most appropriate place in the faculty and divisional structure for disciplines such as Agricultural Economics, Econometrics, Urban Planning and Human Geography.
- 1(i) Continue to discuss ways in which we might better profile and coordinate teaching, research training and research in the social sciences, particularly with key stakeholders in the Faculty of Arts. This might involve consideration of such questions as the structure of the School of Social and Political Sciences and the formation of a Graduate School of Social Sciences.

## STRATEGY TWO: MANAGE MORE EFFECTIVELY THE SIZE AND SHAPE OF THE UNIVERSITY

We will build a student population profile that is compatible with our statement of purpose and that will ensure our financial viability. We will, in particular, pursue our commitment to the education of the most promising students, drawn from a diversity of social and cultural backgrounds.

### Initiative

- 2(a) Charge the divisional boards and the Curriculum Committee of SEG with the responsibility for reviewing annually the student load and mix to ensure educational and financial sustainability.



## ENGAGED ENQUIRY: INTEGRATED EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

*Architecture students William Chan and Amalia Mayor pictured with Associate Professor Anna Rubbo (centre), who has spent the past five years driving Global Studio, a project to improve the lives of the urban poor.*

### STRATEGY THREE: INITIATE A UNIVERSITY-WIDE PROGRAM OF CURRICULUM RENEWAL

Our aim is to produce flexible and creative thinkers, leaders for Australia and the wider world. An education here will equip students with essential skills in critical thinking and communication, and foster an enquiring mind. It will support students in their transition to university, offer a coherent program of courses, and distinguish pathways through degrees.

#### Initiatives

- 3(a) Establish a Curriculum Committee of SEG to oversee a University-wide program of curriculum renewal and ensure coherence of our programs and courses.
- 3(b) Develop University-wide principles for curriculum development.
- 3(c) Conduct a fundamental review of the major undergraduate generalist degree programs.
- 3(d) Articulate the standards and outcomes of teaching and learning experiences that distinguish different degree levels and pathways through degrees.
- 3(e) Implement the assessment principles flowing from the Academic Board review, begun in 2009.
- 3(f) Identify and empower scholars with expertise in curriculum development to champion curriculum renewal and best practice across the University.
- 3(g) Recognise and reward staff contribution to curriculum renewal and innovation.

## STRATEGY FOUR: ENRICH THE EXPERIENCE OF UNIVERSITY LIFE FOR ALL OUR STUDENTS

We aspire to build upon our reputation for the high-quality student experience enjoyed at the University. Our aim is to increase student participation in University life by enriching the services and support that we offer, and enhancing the ways in which they integrate with one another and with our academic programs, to meet the needs of all the students that they serve.

### Initiatives

- 4(a) Review and develop the University's provision of services for student health, wellbeing and welfare.
- 4(b) Support universal access by investing in implementation of the Disability Action Plan 2011–2015, including the allocation of disability officers and ongoing training for staff.
- 4(c) Provide more affordable and appropriate student accommodation on and near the University's campuses, consistent with the Work Slate project on student accommodation.
- 4(d) Undertake a feasibility study of the virtual colleges.
- 4(e) Build upon the current Teaching and Learning Capital Fund project regarding networks of informal learning spaces around campus.
- 4(f) Complete the Student Lifecycle Management program to create a seamless student experience of the University's administration, from first enquiry to alumni engagement.
- 4(g) Prioritise and implement the recommendations of the University Review of Co-curricular Experience to increase the effectiveness and relevance of our co-curricular programs.
- 4(h) Prioritise and implement the recommendations of the University Review of Support for International Students.
- 4(i) Complete the Work Slate projects on social and catering facilities.

**STRATEGY FIVE: EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO DEVELOP AS GLOBAL CITIZENS**

Promoting the University's position in the international academic community is fundamental to all that we do, from education and research to alumni and community engagement. We aim to create more opportunities for our students to engage in research and education outside Australia, to develop our students as global citizens, and to ensure that staff and students who come to the University from overseas find an environment that values the contribution they can make.

**Initiatives**

- 5(a) Build on international exchange opportunities for our students and international experience for our staff.
- 5(b) Finalise the implementation of the Second Language Acquisition project.
- 5(c) Expand the number of World Scholars Program scholarships to attract the best PhD students from priority countries.
- 5(d) Introduce a World Fellows Program for short-term visits by leading international academics and public figures.
- 5(e) Complete and implement the project on Appointments for Overseas Academics to facilitate the fractional appointment of academic staff also employed at an overseas university.
- 5(f) Pursue new funding opportunities to build capacity for international engagement and exchange.

## STRATEGY SIX: DEVELOP OUR CAPACITY TO IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Fundamental changes in the research environment, both in Australia and internationally, require new approaches to achieving and sustaining research excellence. While researchers must be free to follow whatever line of enquiry they choose, a more strategic focus is needed for University investment in both disciplinary and cross-disciplinary work. This will help us to attract, enable and empower researchers in well-resourced and well-maintained environments.

Our aim is to develop and implement an integrated and coherent University-wide approach to planning, delivering, managing and funding our research in a way that demonstrably supports researchers engaged in internationally recognised, transformational research.

### Initiatives

- 6(a) Develop divisional research strategies and negotiate compacts with SEG for endorsement, and, where necessary, support of these strategies.
- 6(b) Develop the capacity for comprehensive recording of University research outputs and for the evidence-based identification of areas of research strength.
- 6(c) Establish a University-wide research fund to allow strategic investment in identified areas of research.
- 6(d) Apply divisional and University research strategies in the ongoing assessment of our infrastructure needs and priorities.
- 6(e) Establish a program for the systematic review and development of University research policies in collaboration between SEG and the Academic Board.
- 6(f) Complete the construction of the Australian Institute for Nanoscience.

**STRATEGY SEVEN: DEVELOP OUR CAPACITY TO IDENTIFY AND PROMULGATE EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING**

Our academic staff should be engaged in developing and applying the best pedagogical practice at all levels, and our students' educational experience must be of a consistently high quality.

We aim to build the capacity of individual teachers and foster the development of teaching teams and communities in degree programs, schools and faculties. All our staff will have access to opportunities for development and teaching and learning support. We will share the best of local practice across the University.

**Initiatives**

- 7(a) Develop divisional teaching excellence strategies and negotiate compacts with SEG for endorsement, and, where necessary, support of these strategies.
- 7(b) Develop new tools for identifying teaching and learning strengths to inform divisional strategies and support the promulgation of best practice.
- 7(c) Establish University-agreed minimum standards for teaching and learning support as appropriate to each faculty.
- 7(d) Apply divisional and University teaching excellence strategies in the ongoing assessment of our infrastructure needs and priorities.
- 7(e) Complete the Learning Space Network Project.
- 7(f) Establish a program for the systematic review and development of University education policies in collaboration between SEG and the Academic Board.
- 7(g) Complete the Abercrombie Precinct infrastructure project.

## **STRATEGY EIGHT: DEVELOP A SMALL NUMBER OF MAJOR CROSS-DISCIPLINARY INITIATIVES IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

To have visible impact in addressing the complex problems facing our nation and our world, we must harness relevant intellectual resources from across the University and provide structures for cross-disciplinary research and education at the University level.

Our aim is to create an environment that promotes and facilitates cross-disciplinary collaborations of high social impact, through targeted and transparent investment in visionary research and education initiatives.

### **Initiatives**

- 8(a) Establish the Centre for Obesity, Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease as an exemplar of a major program of cross-disciplinary research and education in an area of high social impact.
- 8(b) Develop governance and financial arrangements for University-wide research and education programs based on the lessons learned from the establishment of the Centre for Obesity, Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease.
- 8(c) Develop criteria and processes to identify, support and maintain strategic and University-supported research and education initiatives.
- 8(d) Evaluate existing University-wide and University-supported research and education projects, including the Institute for Sustainable Solutions, and refine and strengthen the University Centres Policy.
- 8(e) Establish University-wide centres for education and research on China and South-East Asia Studies, as recommended in the Review of Area Studies, and implement the other recommendations of that review.
- 8(f) Determine the feasibility of up to two new major cross-disciplinary programs of research and education.
- 8(g) Create for each major cross-disciplinary program of research and education a strategy for implementation in the University community which embodies and exemplifies the program's core purpose in our institutional life.

**STRATEGY NINE: AGREE COORDINATED STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING, DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING RESEARCH TALENT FROM UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS TO RESEARCH LEADERS**

Our aim is to create and sustain an environment in which our research talent is supported through technical disciplinary training, but also in more general training in research leadership and management, in skills in commercialisation and communication, and in developing cross-disciplinary research capabilities. We must also provide support and development that is tailored to each stage of the researcher career pathway, from the undergraduate student to the senior researcher.

**Initiatives**

- 9(a) Embed discovery-based learning in all curricula, with opportunities for research experience appropriate to discipline and level.
- 9(b) Develop coordinated faculty, divisional and University-wide programs for researcher induction, and for research training and mentoring at all career stages.
- 9(c) Extend the standard full-time duration of the PhD program to four years to provide scope for broadening methodological and generic skills training, where appropriate.
- 9(d) Develop clearer pathways to the PhD from Honours and alternate prior programs.
- 9(e) Establish discipline-specific guidelines and training for supervisors, including provision for co-supervisors.
- 9(f) Charge the Graduate Office with enhanced responsibility for candidate administration, monitoring of consistency of practice and policy, and procedural development across the University.
- 9(g) Develop a more transparent model for the allocation of income from research students, consistent with the University Economic Model.
- 9(h) Develop programs to extend the leadership skills of researchers heading major research initiatives.

## STRATEGY TEN: PROMOTE INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION, ENGAGEMENT, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The University has a strong commitment to advancing Indigenous education and research and ensuring that it is well supported. Our aim, as a contemporary Australian institution, is to ensure that Indigenous issues and knowledge are core elements of our decision-making, teaching, research and community engagement activities.

### Initiatives

- 10(a) Develop and implement clear strategies in response to the recommendations of the Review of Indigenous Education.
- 10(b) Foster stronger relationships based on mutual respect with local, regional and national Indigenous communities.
- 10(c) Ensure Indigenous perspectives are taken into account in our planning and decision-making processes.
- 10(d) Enhance the pathways and support we provide for Indigenous students to access higher education and pursue both academic and professional staff careers.
- 10(e) Establish mentoring programs specific to Indigenous researchers at all career stages.
- 10(f) Ensure that the specific accommodation needs of Indigenous students in particular are addressed as part of an integrated approach to solving the University's accommodation challenges.
- 10(g) Ensure that more students who graduate from the University do so with a deeper knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture.

**STRATEGY ELEVEN: ATTRACT AND SUPPORT PROMISING STUDENTS FROM A DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS**

Attracting promising students whatever their social or cultural background is core to our sense of purpose and consistent with our history. Our aim is to diversify our student population and, particularly, to increase the participation of students from low socioeconomic, Indigenous, rural and remote backgrounds. We are committed to improving the preparation, aspiration and achievement of intellectually able students from groups currently underrepresented in our student population.

**Initiatives**

- 11(a) Expand our partnerships with specific schools and community organisations to raise awareness of the value of tertiary education, support educational attainment, and increase aspirations for further study.
- 11(b) Review admissions criteria and policies, including those covering pathways, special admissions programs, and ATAR bonuses, to increase participation by underrepresented groups.
- 11(c) Set University, faculty and school targets for recruitment and retention of low SES, Indigenous and rural and remote students.
- 11(d) Complete ongoing negotiations with universities in rural NSW for greater cooperation in education and research, and the provision of flexible pathways for students.
- 11(e) Ensure appropriate support for the retention and achievement of students from underrepresented groups.
- 11(f) Provide staff development activities and resources to build the necessary skills to support the successful implementation of social inclusion and Indigenous education initiatives.
- 11(g) Convene a cross-disciplinary network of researchers into social inclusion and exclusion and related community issues.

## STRATEGY TWELVE: PROVIDE ENHANCED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL OUR STAFF

As a community of engaged enquiry, we will provide all staff with a rich variety of opportunities for learning, opportunities intended both for professional development and for their intrinsic educational value.

### Initiatives

- 12(a) Continue the review of the University's Performance Management and Development system to simplify and better support the University's performance and development needs.
- 12(b) Develop and implement processes for succession planning for the University, ensuring growth opportunities and career development for all staff.
- 12(c) Systematically review current learning programs and initiatives with a view to meeting identified capability development needs.
- 12(d) Facilitate participation by staff in formal academic programs, and also as both teachers and students in non-award and public programs of education.
- 12(e) Review arrangements for performance progression.



## ENGAGED ENQUIRY: LOCAL AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

**STRATEGY THIRTEEN: PRIORITISE INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT ON A REGIONAL BASIS TO SUPPORT THE EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY-WIDE PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS**

Members of the University are part of a wide network of relationships with researchers and policy-makers around the world. Our work enjoys a strong international reputation. But to be more effective in engagement with our partners – academic, governmental and inter-governmental – we commit to greater coordination and focus of our international activities at a University-wide level.

**Initiatives**

- 13(a) Focus our regional engagement efforts on China, South-East Asia, and India as top priorities; Korea, Japan, North America and Europe as medium priorities; and Latin America and Africa as emerging priorities.
- 13(b) Develop a business plan to reflect these priorities and cover existing gaps, as appropriate.
- 13(c) Develop the Sydney World Program of offshore and onshore academic fora, symposia, graduations and alumni receptions, consistent with our regional priorities.
- 13(d) Design an international communications program using media and messages appropriate to targeted audiences, consistent with the University's overall communications strategy.

## STRATEGY FOURTEEN: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A COORDINATED UNIVERSITY-WIDE FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL AND RURAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our engagement in both local and rural areas is diverse and valuable, from research and outreach to student placement and professional development. As we deepen our commitment to engaged enquiry, our aim is to identify those local and rural communities with which we can most fruitfully partner across a range of initiatives. We will identify a number of communities with whom we have existing links, particularly those where we already have a physical presence, and build stronger University-wide cooperation with them across a range of activities.

### Initiatives

- 14(a) Establish an Office of Community Engagement to create and cultivate meaningful and sustainable community partnerships, consistent with our research and education mission.
- 14(b) Conduct an audit of current community engagement programs throughout the University, including those in rural and remote areas, to focus future activity in community engagement.
- 14(c) Identify a sustainable number of projects that include opportunities for education and research activities (in consultation with external groups) that will directly engage local residents, students, staff and alumni.
- 14(d) Embed strategies for community-engaged learning within the curricula of the University through the process of curriculum renewal.
- 14(e) Increase our stakeholders' understanding of the University's mission, goals and messages through the implementation of an integrated marketing and communications plan.
- 14(f) Include in the campus master planning process consideration of the infrastructure required to create and sustain a viable cultural precinct.

**STRATEGY FIFTEEN: DEEPEN OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH A SUPPORTIVE NETWORK OF ALUMNI AND FRIENDS**

The University has a long tradition of engagement with our family of alumni and supporters, who are both advocates for our work and critical friends. A coordinated and consistent approach across the University to engagement with our alumni and supporters is important to achieving our principal goals.

To advance this aim we will continue to broaden opportunities for engagement with the University through our online groups and local and interest-based alumni chapters, program of events, public lecture series, and volunteer programs. We will also provide more, and more convenient, opportunities for philanthropic support.

**Initiatives**

- 15(a) Develop a University-wide volunteer program including recruitment, management, training and recognition for volunteers.
- 15(b) Develop further an alumni loyalty program to provide recognition and benefit.
- 15(c) Ensure alignment of our international and alumni strategies to maximise the benefit of our relationships with alumni groups, and galvanise a growing worldwide network of supporters.
- 15(d) Establish a coordinated University-wide management model for events and public programs, such as Sydney Ideas, that generate intellectual and creative engagement and a sense of community.
- 15(e) Plan and launch a University-wide fundraising campaign with a defined target, led by the Vice-Chancellor.





## MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY: RESOURCES, COSTS AND SERVICES

*Professor of Theoretical and World Archaeology Roland Fletcher with Dr Dan Penny, a senior lecturer in the School of Geosciences and one of Fletcher's partners in an international, multidisciplinary investigation into the decline of the gigantic medieval South-East Asian city of Angkor. Their research offers intriguing insights into the future sustainability of our modern urban life.*

**STRATEGY SIXTEEN: REFINE AND APPLY THE NEW UNIVERSITY ECONOMIC MODEL TO ENSURE GREATER TRANSPARENCY IN RESOURCE AND COST ALLOCATION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING**

We aim to strengthen our capacity for financial analysis and strategic decision-making based on the actual financial circumstances of the University and its constituent units. In particular, it is essential that there be transparency in the internal allocation of resources and costs, and appropriate budget discipline.

We will achieve this through a new economic model, mutual accountability for faculties at the divisional level in the development of budget strategies, better financial reporting and regular budgetary review processes.

**Initiatives**

- 16(a) Introduce the new University Economic Model for the allocation of budgets to academic units and central portfolios.
- 16(b) Align the budget allocation models with the new divisional structure and charge each divisional board with accountability to SEG for budget allocations to faculties in the division.
- 16(c) Introduce a transitional process in the five-year planning cycle to ease the adjustment of academic units to the implications of the University Economic Model.
- 16(d) Review the financial circumstances of those academic units where revenue does not meet costs under the economic model, and determine appropriate strategies for moving those units into budget surplus or ensuring their continuation through cross-subsidy.

## **STRATEGY SEVENTEEN: SYSTEMATICALLY REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

Efficient, cost-effective and coordinated administrative services are an essential foundation for the realisation of our aspirations in education and research. If we are to sustain a University that seeks to achieve our strategic purpose we must support our staff and students through an effective, coordinated and efficient system of administrative and professional services delivery.

### **Initiatives**

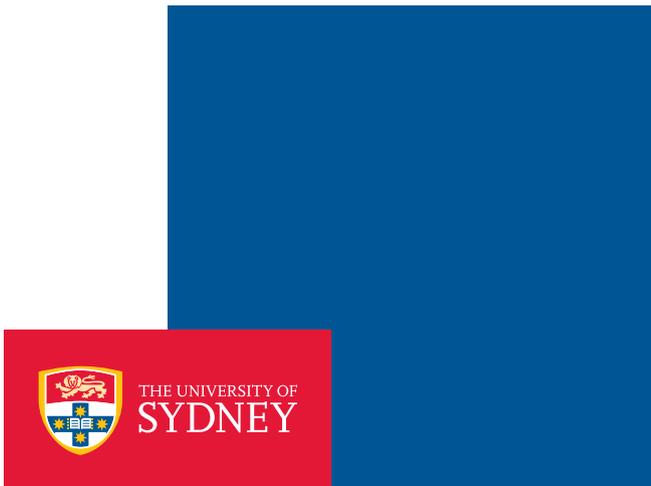
- 17(a) Establish a Services Reform Steering Committee of SEG systematically to review arrangements for the provision of professional services, including mechanisms for ensuring client responsiveness, and beginning with marketing and student recruitment.
- 17(b) Refine existing arrangements for location and management of services in relation to finance, human resources and ICT.





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