1. Background

UQ is committed to creating a positive organisational culture through a suite of strategies, initiatives and actions. We recognise that people and culture are key enablers of our Strategic Plan 2014-2017. The University of Queensland’s global standing as one of the world’s top 100 universities has only been realised through the passionate commitment, outstanding quality and very hard work of our staff.

We know that staff can achieve even greater things within a positive and supportive culture, which is why we are committed to creating a culture that encapsulates our Values and is responsive to constructive organisational change. We want to create a workplace where people feel connected and valued, trust and respect the people they work for and with and have pride in what they do.

This paper provides an outline of our progress to date.

2. Listening to staff

A Culture Working Group was established in 2013 to consider the results of the 2012 Culture Survey and to plan an approach to create a more constructive workplace culture. The Working Group was tasked with identifying measures and initiatives to build and strengthen organisational culture.

The Working Group identified a number of emerging themes and established six sub-groups with the purpose of promoting engagement with staff members across the University community. The sub-groups focused on the following themes:

1. Leadership
2. Communication
3. Introducing and leading change
4. Workloads
5. Bureaucracy and red tape
6. UQ Staff Community

Each sub-group was invited to adopt an inclusive outcome-focussed approach to assist in driving changes to UQ’s organisational culture. Initiatives were grouped into three over-arching themes:

- Communication and collaboration
  - Engaging others in open and honest dialogue; collaborating across internal and external boundaries
- Leadership and Valuing our people
  - Creating an environment to empower and support people to achieve their aspirations
- Red tape reduction: fostering innovation
  - Exploring creative solutions to problems and investigating new ways of working

These themes led to a number of initiatives and actions which were undertaken during 2014. The themes will continue to be explored and be embedded in our approach and behaviours.

3. Initiatives and Actions 2014

3.1 Leadership

A number of measures have been introduced with the aim of developing strong, effective, inclusive and innovative leadership behaviours at all levels throughout the University.

- UQ Leadership Framework

  UQ strives to create a culture where employees in every position, regardless of level are able to demonstrate their leadership and contribute to the accomplishments of the University. To support this culture, the UQ Leadership Framework identifies seven capabilities critical to leadership at UQ. The
Framework reflects UQ’s philosophy of leadership at all levels, meaning that it is relevant not only to senior managers and those in positions of authority, but also to formal and informal leaders across UQ. The University encourages all staff to explore how they can exemplify these capabilities further. Additionally staff are encouraged to join a UQ Leadership Community to connect with others who are interested in developing their knowledge and skills and building a culture that encourages leadership at all levels.

- **UQ Leadership Survey**

  A [UQ Leadership Survey](#) has been developed as a 360-degree survey process designed specifically to support the UQ Leadership Framework. This tool offers leaders the opportunity to gather feedback to help improve their effectiveness as a leader.

  During the latter part of 2013 and into 2014, members of the University's Senior Management Group engaged in a leadership survey and development process using the Human Synergistics LSI; the evidence-based tool that was also used for the 2012 Culture Survey. However, for future surveys UQ has developed its own 360-degree tool which aligns with our UQ Leadership Framework.

  The 360-degree tool, also referred to as the UQ Leadership Survey, has now been piloted. An implementation strategy has been endorsed to support the roll out of the survey to senior staff from 2015 with the expectation that they will undertake the survey biannually. Approximately 280 senior staff will undertake the survey over the next two years, with 150 individuals participating in 2015.

- **Leading Organisational Change**

  The UQ [Guide to Leading Organisational Change](#) was developed in response to concerns identified in the 2012 Culture Survey that the University needed to improve its approach to implementing organisational change. The Guide to Leading Organisational Change web resource includes comprehensive information on leading and managing change constructively, through processes which support our staff and are aligned with our [Values](#). The e-Resource provides an overview of best practice change management methodologies. An Organisational Change Community of Practice ([http://www.hr.uq.edu.au/community-of-practice](http://www.hr.uq.edu.au/community-of-practice)) has been established as a mechanism to share change practice across UQ.

### 3.2 Recognition and Reward

One of the themes identified through the work of the Culture Working Group was the need to strengthen a culture that acknowledges, celebrates and rewards the achievements and performance of UQ staff. Staff have been consulted in the development of a framework to support both formal and informal practices for the recognition of staff within their immediate workplace and at the University-wide level. The new website ([www.hr.uq.edu.au/recognition](http://www.hr.uq.edu.au/recognition)) provides guidance and tips to staff, supervisors and managers on practices that promote a culture of recognition.

UQ currently has a number of organisational awards (Chancellor Awards for Individual and Team Excellence, UQ Leadership and Miracle Worker Awards) that reward leadership behaviour and staff achievement across all levels of the organisation. These awards have been recently reviewed to ensure they are commensurate with the outstanding contributions demonstrated by staff, regardless of position. The review also considered whether the current awards system appropriately recognises the achievements, performance and behaviours which are reflected and supported by UQ’s Strategic Plan, UQ Values and UQ Leadership. We expect to roll out these new awards in 2015.

### 3.3 Governance framework

- **Code of Conduct**

  The revised [Code of Conduct](#), developed through extensive consultation, supports UQ’s [Values](#) by outlining the standards of behaviour expected of us all as colleagues and employees. The Code forms part of our ongoing response to the 2012 Culture Survey to create a more positive, constructive, respectful and supportive workplace.
The revised Code promotes a culture of fair and ethical behavior and an environment where people are treated equitably, with respect, encouragement and recognition. Online Code of Conduct training is currently under development and will be available to staff from early 2015.

- **Conflict of Interest Policy**

  Previously, the Code of Conduct included information about managing conflicts of interest. In recognition of the unique and complex nature of the University's business, the Conflict of Interest policy and procedures for identifying and managing conflicts of interest have been developed.

- **Financial Delegations Register**

  A Delegations of Authority framework and a Financial Delegations Register have been established to provide greater clarity and transparency in relation to levels of responsibility and accountability. Delegations empower our staff to make decisions and promote leadership at all levels of the organisation.

### 3.3 Workshops

A number of workshops have been held throughout the year to increase awareness of the many issues that have an impact on workplace behaviours and culture.

- **Equity and Diversity Forum**

  An Equity and Diversity Forum was held in September 2014 with representation from across the University. Participants at the forum considered the University's Equity and Diversity Priority Areas and discussed affirmative actions and objectives to advance these areas. The Equity and Diversity Priority Areas are to:
  
  - attract and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - attract and retain students from low socio-economic backgrounds and those experiencing disadvantage;
  - provide globalised learning experiences;
  - improve the recruitment, retention and career progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff;
  - improve the recruitment, retention and career progression of women staff;
  - value the diversity of sexualities and gender identities amongst its staff and students; and
  - provide a more accessible institution for all staff and students including people with disabilities.

- **Ethical Leadership**

  The Integrity and Investigations Unit has been established to support a working environment that promotes ethical behaviour and decision making across the University. The Unit conducts Ethics Awareness Workshops to engage and guide managers in conversations on ethical dilemmas and ethical decision making. These workshops aim to engage with our managers on what ethics means to them, what our obligations are as UQ employees and how we can integrate ethical leadership into our everyday lives.

### 3.4 Staff Engagement Survey

In addition to the 2012 Culture Survey, in 2008 and 2011, the University engaged external consultancy, Voice Project to conduct Staff Engagement Surveys, which gave staff the chance to comment on UQ as a workplace.

The surveys produced a wealth of information that informed the development of strategies and initiatives to better support staff and enhance satisfaction with UQ as an employer and organisation. The data also
enabled the University to benchmark itself as an employer within the Australian and New Zealand higher education sector.

UQ’s third survey would normally be conducted during the second semester of 2014. However given the University-wide Culture Survey conducted in late 2012 and the ongoing work associated with responding to issues raised from that survey, the Staff Engagement Survey will now be conducted in April/May of 2015.

3.4 Enhancing workplace culture

Organisational Units across the University are continuing to implement strategies and actions to enhance workplace culture. Examples are the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences (HaBS), Student Affairs and Finance and Business Services (FBS).

Following the Faculty Review of last year, HaBS ran a successful ‘Creating New Cultures’ workshop in February 2014 and has continued to implement initiatives to enhance the workplace experience for staff in the new Faculty. Working groups are considering ‘Consultation and Culture’, ‘Purpose and Goals’, ‘Role Clarity’ and ‘Knowledge of Disciplines’.

Student Affairs has focused on workplace culture during its recent Planning/Away Days. An explicit Culture Change Action Plan is now in place, with five themes therein being taken forward by Division-wide groups. A number of workshops and tailored training sessions have also been provided to empower and enable staff to fully engage with this process and broader issues of cultural change.

Through consultation with groups across UQ, FBS are in the process of implementing a new strategy to enhance service culture and internal client relationships. An improvement program, outlining priority actions, will be communicated to UQ staff later this year. A Client Service Charter will be developed to articulate FBS’ vision and commitment to being a client-focused Division; the Charter will also outline expectations of service performance. Foundation client service training has already been delivered to all FBS staff.

In addition, UQ Wellness, the staff wellness program, has collaborated more closely with management across Faculty, School, Division and Institute levels, to develop and provide targeted health and wellbeing opportunities for UQ’s diverse and geographically-dispersed population. The strategy of embedding staff health and wellbeing into the fabric of University life, is congruent with the University’s aim to move towards a more constructive organisational culture. Year to date, over 1,100 staff members have engaged with the program, with requests for work-unit specific health options increasing. Grant applications to improve the outreach of the program have been successful, with an increasing menu of options planned for 2015.

3.5 Vice-Chancellor’s Open Staff Sessions

The Vice-Chancellor held seven open staff sessions during 2014 to engage with UQ staff members across UQ campuses on the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, Mission, Vision and Values and culture change goals. The majority of sessions were over-subscribed and feedback was very positive with staff members expressing their appreciation of the opportunity to engage directly with the Vice-Chancellor. A copy of the presentation can be found here.

4. The next stage of UQ’s strategic development

UQ operates in a competitive higher education system within a global marketplace. Australian universities face increased financial pressures, the Australian Government’s proposed regulatory changes, reputational pressures and the changing expectations of students, industry and government.

To address these challenges and in recognition of themes arising from the 2012 Culture Survey, new initiatives are being developed with a focus on:

- **Enhancing the student experience**

  UQ is committed to ensuring a continuing focus on our students. Led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), three major initiatives around “Enhancing the Student Experience” were commenced this year and will continue into 2015: (1) student retention and success strategy, (2) employability strategy, and (3) student housing project.
The first two initiatives seek to build on excellent work undertaken at discipline/school/faculty level, by ensuring there are University-wide strategic and practical frameworks to help students stay and succeed in their studies, and go on to achieve fulfilling careers. Activities will be overseen by the recently established Student Experience Committee and progress reported to Academic Board and the University Senior Management Group.

Approval has been received to undertake a feasibility and in-depth design study to build the first UQ-owned student accommodation which will complement the Colleges at St Lucia campus. A Project Control Group and a User Group have been established and it is expected that the preferred architects will be selected by year’s end, with a detailed design and tender proposal to be presented to Senate in the second half of 2015.

- **Improving the nexus between teaching and research**

Work is underway to determine how UQ’s research and learning endeavours can be better integrated. Led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), discussions are focused on how students can gain maximum benefit from being in a research intensive university where staff are international leaders in their fields. Consideration is being given as to how we can increase the involvement of highly successful researchers in teaching to achieve the University’s strategic objective of providing a research enriched curriculum as part of the UQ Advantage. As a first step in 2014 the University has developed two new fellowship schemes to be advertised shortly that seek to retain and foster high-calibre mid-career and senior academic staff, and enable a trajectory of continued excellence in research and teaching innovation.

- **Enhancing Academic Performance**

Led by the Provost, UQ will develop a workforce profile and high performance culture to meet the challenge of a deregulated environment, support our ambitions and maintain our global standing. To achieve this we need to:
  - Enhance the academic workforce
  - Direct efforts and funding toward greater capacity and capability in our teaching and research academics
  - Retain and attract staff aligned with our strategic goals
  - Invest in building a world-class academic workforce

- **Enhancing Systems and Services**

Led by the Vice-Chancellor and a broad senior steering group, in 2015 UQ will launch a program to review, change and streamline business and academic administrative systems and processes to enhance UQ’s ability to deliver its core functions of learning, discovery and engagement. The program will seek to ensure that UQ’s resources are applied optimally in pursuit of fulfilling UQ’s mission in a competitive and challenging external environment. This will be a long-term program and will seek engagement from staff members across the university. The program’s objectives will be to:
  - Enhance the student experience and increase student satisfaction levels
  - Improve the workplace experience for staff members
  - Ensure a better use of UQ’s resources through improved operational efficiency and effectiveness

In an environment, characterised by globalisation, greater competition and potential deregulation of the higher education sector, our organisational culture, leadership and values will become even more important to our success in the longer term. Cultural change is not a project with a defined life but is a mindset that must be embedded in every aspect of our business and workplace.

Professor Peter Høj
Vice-Chancellor and President
November 2014