



UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Background and Context

The UWA campus was established in 1911 and was the first university in Western Australia. It is a picturesque campus located adjacent to Matilda Bay along Perth's Swan River, about 15 minutes from the CBD. The university had undertaken periods of rapid growth and expansion over its 100-year history, but has still retained a strong historical character and beautifully landscaped grounds. This is a key attribute of the campus, attracting students and staff.

The university had been experiencing a decrease in enrolments since 2014. This was attributed to local competition and a growth in students leaving the state for university, whereas in the past they tended to stay close to home. The academic reputation of UWA was recognised as no longer being enough to attract students. Online reviews and anecdotal evidence showed that their decision making included the campus experience. Although UWA is not far from the Perth CBD, it doesn't provide the same diversity of experience

as an urban university directly adjacent to city amenity, activity and density. After-hours and on weekends the campus and the surrounding area is quiet.

Whilst the university performed well in research rankings, the student experience sits lower than the national Quality in Learning and Teaching (QILT) indicators average in some critical areas related to the campus. Other Group of Eight institutions across Australia struggle with a similar predicament. Older, heritage campuses are finding it more challenging to compete with newer, agile campus environments. For these institutions a strong focus on academic reputation and research has come at the cost of neglect to some campus facilities. A key recruitment base for UWA has previously been local private schools. Facilities at these schools were starting to surpass the quality of those offered at UWA.

The physical estate needed to form an important part of the solution to attracting and retaining students as the university planned for growth.

Project

The Campus Intuition work formed part of a wider project with Turnberry Consulting (Masterplan Vision) and FreeState (Activation Plan) looking at a strategy for the next ~30 years. Taking a very different approach to a typical masterplan, the team were looking at ways to activate and revitalise the existing assets and campus facilities. Together, this would involve immediate, short-term and long-term projects and initiatives.

This approach was taken for a number of reasons:

- Reduce reliance on new buildings to solve experience issues and focus on improving existing under-performing assets;
- Direct budgets to initiatives that will improve student experience.

Methodology

Australia is one of the few countries where a national survey is run annually collecting data on student experience – Quality in Learning and Teaching Indicators (QILT). This collects data from undergraduate and postgraduate students on their university experience. It covers teaching, resources, facilities, support, skills development and their level of

“When it comes to understanding student experience, campus planning tends to have a top down approach. Engaging students about campus issues is complex. Our work with Dr Hall turned this around. With feedback from over a thousand students it's given us new insight to the campus experience they are having, from eating venues to classroom design. This has been used to brief consultants for our masterplan, to make sure we are designing for a better student experience”

Trevor Humphreys, Director Campus Management, UWA

engagement. QILT gives institutions a high level insight into the performance of their institution, including facility related indicators such as satisfaction with teaching spaces, libraries and labs. What is missing from this data, is ‘why’. UWA performed below national average in regards to some of these areas (like student common areas and settling into study after arrival), but why?

Our steps in creating an experience centric campus

Step 1: Experience evaluation

Using our trademark tools and processes, we rate and assess the experience of users across your campus or campuses.

Step 2: Gap analysis and benchmark

We analyse the thousands of data points collected, and make comparisons to others campuses. This helps us determine key performance gaps.

Step 3: Campus uplift strategy

The data tells a story from which we advise where you should be spending money on campus to deliver a better experience.

Step 4: Check in

We help you stay in touch with changes year on year, monitor the return from your investments and adjust planning to remain experience centric.



To answer this, our approach with UWA was both quantitative and qualitative. Campus Intuition undertook a comprehensive student engagement program to gather feedback from students on the physical campus and facilities. The aim of our approach is to go beyond existing measurements to understand the impact campus facilities have on student experience. With this insight, targeted improvements can be funded that have a big impact on campus users without necessarily costing a lot.

A communication strategy was developed with the internal marketing team. We collected feedback from students through social media polls, pop-up stands around the campus, photo-voice journals and our Campus Experience Index. Over 1200 students participated and far surpassed the expected numbers. The data was rich in detail, thousands of comments and suggestion were analysed for key themes and sentiment. We also met one-on-one with faculty and professional staff to understand their key challenges in providing a good student experience.

Results

The image on the following page is a sample of some data from the Campus Experience Index which was used at UWA to determine how students rate and perceive:

- Journey and arrival to campus
- Teaching and learning spaces
- Library and study facilities
- Social, relax and rejuvenate spaces
- Wayfinding and accessibility
- Information technology on campus
- Community and belonging
- Eating experience
- Safety on campus

To communicate this information, we delivered a scorecard of results and then more detailed breakdowns of the results in each area. Wherever possible, we provide very site specific feedback (down to a particular room). This approach enables clients to integrate findings into capital planning and maintenance.



As part of the engagement students gave feedback about the campus at pop-up stands scattered through high traffic areas



Students sent in images as part of the experience mapping, many focused on the picturesque landscape outdoors - but there were few of community and social activities

Students have a strong sense of pride in the UWA campus. The focus on landscaping over the decades of development has ensured that nature is front and centre. Students took many photos of the natural environment. One of the favourite places to study is the Reid Library which looks out onto the natural landscape and has abundant daylight access from both sides of the building.

As with many legacy Group of Eight campuses in Australia, the stock is aging. Heritage buildings provide a beautiful vista, but are much more challenging to maintain. The results showed that this impacts learning in some spaces due to discomfort related to several factors which varied across buildings. For instance, some buildings showed higher temperature complaints,

Students gave detailed feedback on various cafés and eating venues across campus. There was a desire for high quality facilities in addition to traditional food halls.

The libraries are a main attraction on campus and a recent refurbishment to the Reid Library had become an enemy of its own success becoming very popular. Locating a quiet study space on campus has become more challenging.

The results, alongside the Freestate and Turnberry consulting, showed the need to create a vibrant heart to the campus that wasn't solely focused around the library. Students could have a better overall experience on campus if some of the key issues were resolved – such as:

- Communication, timing and location of events
- More functional outdoor seating to provide social and relaxation spaces
- Longer opening hours and availability of food after hours
- Vibrancy on campus past 4pm
- Timetabling considerations that enable travel time to campus, and between classes
- Consistency in wifi (with several specific locations cited)
- Night light and safety issues (particularly for women)

Campus Experience Index - data sample

	Campus yr 1	Benchmark
Teaching spaces	73%	●
Library areas	71%	●
Informal Study spaces	59%	●
Eating experience	61%	●
Safety on campus	58%	●
Community & belonging	75%	●
Information technology	34%	●
Wayfinding & accessibility	46%	●
Journey & arrival	60%	●
Rest & relaxation spaces	80%	●

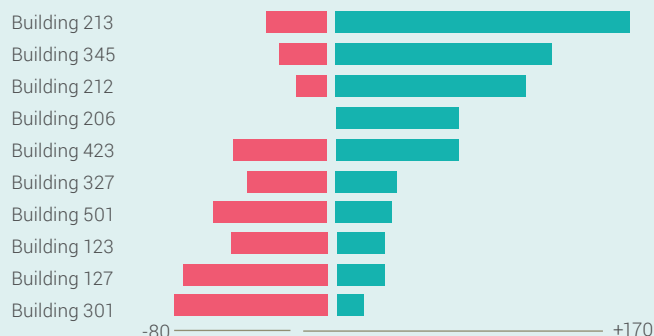
Safety perception: Variation between groups



What adds or detracts from safety on campus? (313 comments)

- + Security presence and clear protocols
- + Security phones and signage around campus
- +/- Security escorts, but not always available
- Low lighting on thoroughfares between library, Car Parks A-C and walkway to park east of campus

Student feedback by buildings (negative and positive)



Characteristics of high-quality teaching stock on campus





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