Addendum to L&T Strategic Framework Green Paper: 12th June 2015

Preamble
We have received a substantial amount of feedback online, which has not yet been thoroughly analysed. However, the reference group feels that it is important to address the significant amount of discussion generated through the consultation meetings to date, and provide an update on how that feedback is being considered as part of the white paper development. This short addendum outlines a few key items that have received comments and presents a brief response from the reference group.

Feedback will continue to be accepted until June 30th.

Introduction pp. 3-6

Purpose of Green Paper
The Learning and Teaching Strategic framework is a framework for action; and whilst it does set goals, at its core it is designed to provide strategic direction that enables and empowers Faculties to plan their learning and teaching approaches for the next 5-10 years. It is designed to communicate core learning and teaching values and priorities to all staff and students and provide a direction for action.

Aligned with other key MQ frameworks: A Framing of Futures and the Research White Paper, the L&T Green Paper is a consultative document, designed to allow staff time to contemplate how we can connect in more dynamic ways and meet shared objectives in Learning and Teaching.

The Green Paper has been the core of a consultation process that has involved nearly fifty Departmental, Faculty and Office meetings and numerous other avenues for communication and discussion. The feedback from this process will inform the development of the final L&T White Paper. Arising from that White Paper will be operational plans which will be developed in consultation with Faculties and Offices.

Undergraduate focus
There has been some feedback that the focus of the Green Paper is on undergraduate coursework, and it is true that many of the initiatives apply to undergraduate offerings. However, the principles which underpin the Framework apply to all coursework offered by the university, and the White Paper will reflect this more overtly.
Employability (work and life skills) pp. 7
In the Green Paper, employability is described as follows:

‘A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy’

Employability is a complement to principles outlined in A Framing of Futures – [to build] a culture of transformative learning in a research-enriched environment. It is implicit in the Green Paper’s approach that employability is not about a specific employment outcome. Rather, employability embraces a broader range of capabilities that a University education enables – ensuring that our graduates are equipped for a fulfilling working life. In particular, the Green Paper emphasizes the embedding of employability skills (communication, creativity, collaboration, resilience etc.) and the importance of experiential learning in the curriculum. Also implicit is the understanding that disciplinary scholarship and intellectual rigor are integral to a University education, and the focus on employability is not at their expense. Indeed, the Green Paper recognizes that employability includes those dimensions.

However, there was feedback that the term employability is limiting. This is not the intent of the Green Paper - and the White Paper will confirm a definition of employability as a suite of attributes and capabilities that prepare a graduate for life and work in a fluid, complex global environment.


Internships pp. 6-7
Macquarie University already has a positive reputation for its experiential learning programs, centred around PACE. The opportunity exists to extend and expand that successful program to provide directed employability outcomes for those who desire them. Drawing on the experience of overseas universities, the Green Paper suggests that we build on and extend the many relationships we have established though the PACE program (currently over 1,300 partners), and extend new opportunities to future students around paid work placement opportunities or internships.
The Green Paper proposes the creation of a paid internship opportunity in all undergraduate degree programs. It does not propose that *every student will have an internship*, but that all students, having met appropriate prerequisites, would have that opportunity. The White Paper will confirm this intent, and subsequent to its adoption, the University will commit appropriately to its implementation.

Opportunities of this type raise several challenges in terms of finding and managing partners, quality assurance and student safety. Suitable internship partners from industry, government, community and NGOs will take time to identify, develop and scaffold opportunities for students and we understand this is no small undertaking. The Green Paper has set 2025 as the milestone for delivering the option for a paid internship across all undergraduate programs at Macquarie. The ambition remains a priority for the White Paper; with the acknowledgement that achieving this objective will require discipline context and a great deal of effort.

It is worth noting that other Universities in the Sydney basin have also begun to explore these goals but none have the breadth, depth and diversity of relationships that already exist in PACE. It is therefore sensible to build on our existing and extremely strong foundations.

**Program-based approach to curriculum design pp. 8**

The framework is designed to embed a culture of program-based learning and teaching, which begins by asking two questions. Firstly, what does a graduate in a program need to know, be able to do, and have experienced? Secondly, how do we deliver this sustainably with the resources we will have? Taking a team-based approach (using resources from across the University as already exemplified in a number of programs), programs can be constructed to ensure that outcomes, assessments, activities and content align with the resources required for delivery.

Faculties will review, redevelop and enable re-accreditation of their programs across a five-year cycle. As well as ensuring program level learning outcomes are met for students, Faculties will be asked to address issues of viability and sustainability and take the opportunity to design for efficiency and effectiveness across their offerings. This will enable a more integrated approach to assessment and resource sharing (for example), and innovative delivery models, as well as some reduction in unit and program offerings. Student data and learning analytics will be made available to Faculties to assist conversations about student retention, progression and success and also to identify improvements to student engagement.

The exact model of implementation will vary between Faculties. Implementation and oversight requires appropriate recognition of the leadership by Program -
Directors and Heads of Department, in guiding and supporting staff through the changes to curriculum and delivery that emerge.

In some disciplines extensive work has already been done to embrace a program-level approach (for example, Biological Sciences, Engineering, Clinical Science). The Framework is designed to draw on these best practice examples and embed a culture of program-based curriculum planning, design and review.

There have been requests for clarity over the definition of a program (for example, questions with respect to how broader graduate attributes would be embedded in programs with majors). There have also been questions around resource allocation. Once the principles have been accepted, such details will be addressed thoroughly in implementation plans.

**Embedded Breadth and Context of Knowledge (People and Planet) pp. 10 – 11**

The conversation around People and Planet units has emerged as a key point of discussion. The provocation to introduce a large-scale online provision of Big History instead of existing People and Planet offerings by 2017 has provoked extremely useful conversations.

In the 2008 White Paper, People and Planet offerings were introduced and required all students, regardless of their chosen discipline to complete at least one unit of study designated ‘People’, and one designated ‘Planet’. In this model: ‘People’ units of study should focus on the development of what it means to be engaged and ethical local and global citizens & ‘Planet’ units of study should help us to understand the nature of science and the challenges and issues facing the world at present.

While the intention was widely accepted on the grounds of development of cognitive capabilities [depth and breadth] with funds earned centrally pooled with most returning to Departments, implementation has resulted in some challenges. The 90+ unit options has inadvertently resulted in confused staff and students and an administrative burden in ‘saving’ students who have made an incorrect choice of unit. Student feedback suggests that, as well as being confused by the People and Planet requirements; some students take an instrumental approach and choose the easiest option (based on word of mouth) or the unit most relevant to their degree (contrary to the desire for breadth and context).
There will continue to be discussion on this topic, but the expectation is that the model suggested in the Green Paper will be revised. The White Paper will propose a revision of People and Planet criteria that builds on the existing principles, and aligns with our aspirations around employability, connectivity, transdisciplinarity and engaging with the Big Ideas society is currently facing. Only purpose-built units that meet these strict criteria will be offered as People/Planet.

**Connecting Technologies and Spaces pp. 15-16**
The boundaries between face-to-face and online modes of teaching and learning are increasingly blurred. The Green Paper argues for further exploration of online and blended opportunities, including assessment, and the development of a technologies and spaces roadmap. There has been some feedback suggesting that the requirement for ‘online assessment to be the default’ does not take into account the diversity of assessment practices (particularly around lab work and field work etc.).

The White Paper will modify this statement, and articulate more clearly the intent – which is the ambition to think innovatively about assessment (including exams), and how assessment might be reconfigured to better contribute to student learning in the context of available resources. It will also further encourage the development of teaching designs and techniques that maximise and encourage student engagement and active learning, using the most appropriate modes and technologies.

**Students as Partners pp. 21-22**
The Green Paper argues for students to be partners and co-creators in their formal learning, with an emphasis on active and collaborative learning – as well as ensuring student involvement in wider areas of learning design and leadership. This remains a priority for the White Paper.

There have been questions as to the effectiveness of such approaches, and the following may be useful reading:

Bovill.C. (n.d.) Students and staff co-creating the curriculum: research into three case studies from Scotland, Ireland and the USA.

<http://journals.heacademy.ac.uk/doi/full/10.11120/bmhe.2014.00008>
As part of discussions around aligned objectives, the research/teaching nexus and recognition and reward, there has been a proposal to develop a teaching-excellence pathway to enable the proper development of our teaching-focussed positions, and properly recognise the importance of our learning and teaching. This would ensure appropriate professional development, criteria for promotion (including level E) and a career pathway that recognizes diverse skills and abilities, provides professional opportunities and rewards them appropriately. The White Paper will expand on these possibilities.