

Vice-Chancellor and President's review

The University of Queensland (UQ) withstood multiple challenges in 2022 to consolidate its position as one of Australia's leading universities – and among the top 50 universities globally.

After a difficult and disrupted start, 2022 developed into a year in which the University repeatedly and successfully pursued its mission of delivering for the public good through excellence in education, research, and community engagement.

I am proud to say that we made real progress in the implementation of a number of the strategic priorities this year – the first year of our new 4-year Strategic Plan – while also broadening the University's societal impact in a range of areas.

A difficult start to the year

As the first widespread wave of COVID-19 transmission took hold in Queensland in early 2022, the University encouraged most staff to work from home for the first 6 weeks of the year. Staff and students started returning to campus in large numbers in mid-February, just in time for the start of the academic year.

However, the sense of normality was short-lived as a severe weather event inundated South East Queensland in late February, causing major flooding across multiple UQ sites, including our St Lucia and Gatton campuses. This led to the closure of all UQ sites across South East Queensland for a week and resulted in a one-week pause to teaching in Semester 1.

Through this challenging time, our staff aided nearly 2,000 students who had no power at home – and also found emergency accommodation for 370 students who simply couldn't return home due to flooding. Meanwhile, teams worked around the clock to protect vital infrastructure and manage the flood recovery and clean-up process.

Learning and student experience

In total, we enrolled 55,014 students across 392 educational programs in 2022. We graduated 13,860 students.

Although there was some softening of demand for higher education among domestic students as Australia experienced strong economic growth and labour shortages across a range of industries, UQ remained the state's most sought-after destination for high-achieving school leavers.

With the gradual reopening of Australia's international border (starting in late 2021), international students started to return to Queensland to study with us on campus.

However, some international students could not travel to Australia due to some ongoing impacts of the pandemic. For this reason, we continued to teach in dual mode (both on campus and online) throughout 2022.

Research and innovation

As a leading Australian research-intensive university, UQ is committed to the generation of knowledge through excellence in discovery science and fundamental research, as well as translating our research into progressive ideas, better services, and products that benefit society.

Some 3,846 active research projects were underway across UQ in 2022 – and we continued to invest in impactful research across a wide variety of fields by approving 1,081 new projects this year.

Many of these projects are seeking to address global challenges, such as climate change and energy transition, food and water security, biodiversity conservation, and disease prevention and treatment.

The University's research community continues to excel on the global stage, with 42 UQ researchers included on the 2022 Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers list. According to this prestigious global survey of research excellence, UQ now has more highly cited researchers than any other Australian university.

Among the many highlights of this year, UQ secured \$50 million in May under the Federal Government's Trailblazer Universities Program to establish a new Food and Beverage Accelerator (FaBA) to nurture innovation in Australia's agricultural, food and beverage sector. UQ is also a partner in another successful Trailblazer program – the Resources Technology and Critical Minerals hub, led by Curtin University.

In November, the Australian Research Council (ARC) announced that UQ had secured \$105 million in funding to establish 3 new Centres of Excellence focused on Indigenous Futures, Quantum Biotechnology, and Green Electrochemical Transformation of Carbon Dioxide. These 3 Centres will work in close collaboration with non-government organisations, government, industry, and university partners as they seek to find solutions to intractable societal challenges.

In December, we signed a partnership agreement with the Queensland Government, Griffith University, and global healthcare company Sanofi to establish a significant new mRNA vaccine research facility in Brisbane. Known as the Translational Science Hub, the \$280 million facility will link our local researchers with Sanofi mRNA Centres of Excellence in France and the United States.

At the very end of the year, we also announced 2 separate trials of UQ-developed medical innovations. The first involved a proof-of-concept trial for a re-engineered version of the innovative molecular clamp vaccine platform, and the second was a safety trial for a pioneering ultrasound device that has been developed to improve the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Enriching our communities

Beyond the direct impact of our education and research programs, UQ is committed to enriching communities – both locally and globally – by spreading understanding, raising awareness, disseminating culture, building capacity, creating opportunities, and connecting people.

A major highlight of this year was the August launch of a new UQ initiative called 'The Queensland Commitment'. The strategic intent of The Queensland Commitment is to provide a more level playing field when it comes to accessing a university education, by removing many of the personal, financial, and geographic barriers that might deter Queensland students from studying at UQ.

This is our pledge to disrupt education disadvantage by improving our pathway programs and growing our philanthropic endowment fund, so that we can provide many more needs-based scholarships for future generations of Queensland students.

Building for the future

In early 2022, we opened 2 substantial new buildings at our St Lucia campus. The Andrew N. Liveris Building was officially opened in April, as a purpose-built home for the School of Chemical Engineering. In May, we officially opened Kev Carmody House, our new student residential building (although the inaugural cohort of over 600 students took up residence earlier in the year).

In other developments at St Lucia, we opened a new restaurant and events venue in Alumni Court; commenced construction of a new Plant Growth Facility; began a major renewal project of the UQ Lake and surrounds, including the construction of a new amphitheatre; and started a project to restore the Avalon Theatre. We also confirmed that the Union Complex will keep its village-style design and, where possible, existing elements including the Schonell Theatre, Forum and Union Building (building 21A) will be retained.

After a major restoration, we officially opened UQ Brisbane City in August. This heritage-listed building at 308 Queen Street has rapidly become a popular hub where our staff, students and alumni can connect with one another and engage with UQ's many government, industry and community partners.

Thank you

Despite the challenges we faced early this year, 2022 has been a year of significant achievement and progress for the University. The improvement in our performance and impact this year is due to the collective efforts of our staff working across UQ's faculties, schools, research institutes and centres, administrative and service divisions.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of our staff, our senior executive team, and members of the University Senate, including our Chancellor, Peter N Varghese AO.

Thank you for your hard work, your commitment to our mission, and your dedication to serving the broader UQ community. It's an honour to work alongside you.

I look forward to building on our many successes and achievements in 2023, and beyond.

Professor Deborah Terry AO
Vice-Chancellor and President