



Creating an Age Friendly University

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1. Introduction

UN Sustainability Development Goal 3 is “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.” The WHO has repeatedly warned of a dearth of geriatric health care providers across disciplines¹. More generally, universities create research, as well as researchers, practitioners, and informed citizens, and thus need to address and reflect both the benefits and issues of an aging society².

UQ is embarked upon an ambitious journey to become the first Age Friendly University in the Southern Hemisphere [<https://ami.group.uq.edu.au/about/uq-age-friendly-university-initiative>].

Here, we highlight instances where UQ is showing exceptional leadership in best practice, and instances that are a focus of short and medium term enhancement of age-friendly practices, with respect to the 10 Age Friendly University Principles.

2. Case Example 1

AFU Principle 8 is “To enhance access for older adults to the university’s range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities.”

- UQ Healthy Living offers world-class health assessment and personal exercise and wellness programs facilitated by an interdisciplinary student-led clinic featuring exercise physiology, psychology, social work, audiology, nutrition, and occupational and physical therapy students to provide tailored restorative programs for older adults.



- UQ’s Art Museum offers existing community engagement programs, including for older adults, but we are striving to ensure the museum’s activities and exhibit space are not only age friendly, but also dementia friendly. Thus, the museum will be evaluated to be certified as “dementia friendly” by those living with dementia, through a local certification process.



10 Principles of an Age Friendly University

1. To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research programs.
2. To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue second careers.
3. To recognize the range of educational needs of older adults (from those who were early school-leavers through to those who wish to pursue Master’s or PhD qualifications).
4. To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages.
5. To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation.
6. To ensure that the university’s research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society and to promote public discourse on how higher education can better respond to the varied interests and needs of older adults.
7. To increase the understanding of students of the longevity dividend and the increasing complexity and richness that aging brings to our society.
8. To enhance access for older adults to the university’s range of health and wellness programs and its arts and cultural activities.
9. To engage actively with the university’s own retired community.
10. To ensure regular dialogue with organizations representing the interests of the aging population.

3. Case Example 2

AFU Principle 6 is “To ensure that the university’s research agenda is informed by the needs of an aging society...”

- UQ’s potential COVID-19 vaccine is entering an important new phase of testing with the live coronavirus to determine how effectively it induces protection against coronavirus infection. The UQ team will partner with the Dutch company, [Viroclinics Xplore](#), on the crucial pre-clinical studies. Many researchers at UQ are not only researching topics that benefit older adults, but are actively involving older adults as research participants and co-designers of research³.



4. Case Example 3

AFU Principle 2 is “To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue second careers.”

- The UQ Business School is developing a Lifelong Achievers Program, designed to support older adults in the development and launch of new ventures, whether they are tech startups, commercial ventures, or social impact initiatives. A key component of this initiative will be an accelerator program which will enable these ventures to build business models and prototypes, co-create with stakeholders, and undertake all the steps needed to successfully launch.

5. Conclusions

Across the world, populations are ageing. Age is a significant facet of our diverse community, and we are now attending it in earnest. Over the last 10 months, our Age Friendly University working party have engaged in a process of discovery and conversation, during which we have celebrated strong existing models of age-friendly practice, identified paths to bolster existing initiatives to strengthen their embrace of age-friendly principles, and targeted longer-term goals to put in place innovative age-friendly initiatives within our community. We are now ready to apply to become an Age Friendly University, to articulate our commitment to the 10 Age Friendly University principles, and to establish a strong framework to measure our successes and gaps. Our entire community – students, academic and support staff, alumni, external stakeholders, and senior leadership – are committed to this agenda. .

References

1. Holveck, C. A., & Wick, J. Y. (2018). Addressing the Shortage of Geriatric Specialists. *The Consultant Pharmacist*, 33(3), 130-138.
2. Pachana, N.A. (2016). *Very Short Introduction to Aging*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
3. Pachana, N.A., Liddle, J., Peel, N.N., Beattie, E., Juang, C. & Knight, B.G. (2015). Can we do better? Researchers’ experiences with ethical review boards on projects with later life as a focus. *Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease*, 43(3), 701-707.

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