


UNSW to launch fully online prep course for international students

By **TIM DODD**, HIGHER EDUCATION EDITOR

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UNSW will launch a new fully online preparation course for international students next year, enabling students to complete the program in their home country before coming to Australia.

The four month online transition program, which students will be able to do as an alternative to studying in a face-to-face classroom in Sydney, will begin early next year.

It will be delivered in partnership with Australian education technology company OpenLearning, on OpenLearning's platform which emphasises group learning and interaction between students, as well as between students and their instructor.

UNSW Global CEO Laurie Pearcey said the transition program offered by UNSW to international students helped ready them to commence a degree.

They learnt communication skills, academic literacy, critical thinking, essay writing as well as skills in specific subject disciplines. It is aimed at students who already have a high standard of English. Those with less English skills do a longer foundation course before their degree studies.

Mr Pearcey said that the new program would offer students a far higher quality online learning experience than had been available since face-to-face learning had ended in March due to the pandemic. "For the past six months it's been a Moodle-based online offering," he said.

Mr Pearcey said the new online version of the transition program would have fees of \$15,960 — about 20 per cent cheaper than the face-to-face program, which would still be offered to international students on the UNSW campus.

The new online program puts UNSW in a good position for the post-COVID recovery in the international education industry.

It will offer students the option of a cheaper transition program, and give them the ability to do it from their home country, thus saving four months of living expenses in Australia.

Because Australian universities will face strong competition for international students from other countries — particularly the US, the UK and Canada — in the wake of the pandemic, advantages such as an online transition program will be important in attracting students.

OpenLearning CEO Adam Brimo said that the new online transition program was carefully designed to enable international students to maximise their interaction and engagement.

He said that students would learn in small groups, and each day would begin with a “stand up” in which students discussed their learning and were coached and mentored by their instructor. As the course progressed students would coach and mentor each other under their instructor’s supervision.

“We’ve designed a lot of socially constructive activities,” said Mr Brimo, who is a UNSW alumni. “We really want to demonstrate a new kind of online delivery.”

He said the course will have no traditional lectures or tutorials. The learning activities will have continuous assessment linked to the learning outcomes of the course, so exams will not be necessary. But there will be a final interview where students will present their portfolio of learning.

Mr Brimo said students were likely to get more interaction in the online program than they would in a traditional face-to-face course. He said it would be “a superior learning experience that will thoroughly prepare students to succeed at Australia’s top universities”.

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Tim Dodd is The Australian's higher education editor. He has over 25 years experience as a journalist covering a wide variety of areas in public policy, economics, politics and foreign policy, including reporti... [Read more](#)



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