The Campus Character Plan develops a broad design approach for the University of Canberra’s Bruce campus. The design implements the Planning and Design Guidelines for landscape, circulation, and building design described in the University of Canberra 2012 Campus Master Plan. The design approach will be realised incrementally through the design and construction of building, landscape and infrastructure projects.

The Character Plan recognises that the campus character is evolving from buildings within a parkland to a denser more urban setting. It develops this urban character through the application and interpretation of the regional expression of the fundamental elements of the landscape: the shape of the land, the movement and impact of water, the vegetation, and the cultural systems of public space and circulation.

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A Campus Defined by Landform
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Looking north west at the College Street bus interchange and campus entry beneath the future Great Hall.

Looking north west at the College Street campus entry showing the arrival square and Great Hall.
Looking north west over the University Hub

Looking north up the Kirinari Street shared way
Legible Systems

INTRODUCTION

This Campus Character Plan defines the future character of the urban environment of the University, providing a comprehensive, sustainable and memorable design for the campus within its wider setting. It works with the existing qualities of the campus – its natural setting, siting, landform and current landscape and built fabric – to develop a cohesive urban whole.

The Plan generates the setting for multiple informal encounters between students, faculty, staff and visitors, and between campus users and the wider systems underpinning the surrounding landscape. The Plan establishes a structure that will enable growth over time, and accommodate different uses and changes in the University. It provides broad strategic physical directions that frame, but does not limit, possibility.

The fundamental concepts of this plan are the urban landscape setting and the legible systems of the campus. A strong symbolic campus structure is achieved by expressing the intertwining of natural and cultural systems. The location of the linear University Concourse, the University’s academic and social core, running north-south along a ridge, between the exposed geology of the engineered cutting at College Street and the undisturbed natural form of University Hill, is central to this symbolic structure. The tension of this physical arrangement is reinforced by locating spaces for passive and cultural systems.

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This urban structure both symbolises and enables the rich experience of life available at a great university, where programmatic overlap is key to a rounded education. Surrounding natural systems are communicated as part of this experience. This layer of natural systems represents life, creativity and reinvention – making these key symbolic threads of education present in the everyday life of the campus.

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The public realm of the campus, being the location of much university life, demands a distinctly urban setting. As time passes, a sense of urbanity will replace the sense of a low-density campus in parkland.

Urbanity is the defining characteristic of the university. The campus will expand to a scale where its population is large and active enough to generate the cultural systems associated with an urban centre. Urbanity is the physical reflection of these systems. The public realm of the campus, being the location of much university life, demands a distinctly urban setting. As time passes, a sense of urbanity will replace the sense of a low-density campus in parkland.

LEGIBLE SYSTEMS

The character of the campus is developed as an urban fusion of the systems that run through it: an urban environment developed and expressed through four principal means – landform, vegetation, water, and public space and circulation. The Campus Character Plan structure follows these key systems chapter by chapter, identifying key aspects of each theme, how they relate to form systems, and are translated into the urbanity of the campus structure and its daily experience. The key places of the Concourse and University Green are provided as developed examples of how natural and cultural systems are woven with an urban character to form cohesive settings for University life.

1. LANDFORM

Landform is a powerful basis for the campus character. It is developed in response to the underlying topography and geology of the campus. Its manipulation in the form of cuttings, constructed landforms and terraces translates its character into urban form. The views and vistas inherent in the site are maintained and enhanced by the approach to landform.

2. WATER

Water brings the physical structure of the campus to life. Its flow responds to landform and in turn, vegetation associations respond to its flow. Stormwater is harvested and treated through a campus scale integrated system of water management. The visible flow of water across the campus is aligned with pedestrian routes and is an important aspect of the campus experience.

3. VEGETATION

Vegetation expresses the relationships between topography, water and climate, and the intertwining of landscape layers and systems, both natural and cultural. Planting strategies are constructed based upon colour and typology to provide a structure to the campus and a legible reading of landform and water flow. Black and white trunk eucalypts are used in contrasting group plantings to aid wayfinding whilst large grid plantations provide a cohesive structure to the campus whole. Planting and vegetation will remain ecologically vibrant and functional and include a visible productive flow. Black and white trunk eucalypts are used in contrasting group plantings to aid wayfinding whilst large grid plantations provide a cohesive structure to the campus whole. Planting and vegetation will remain ecologically vibrant and functional and include a visible productive layer.

4. PUBLIC DOMAIN

The structure and life of the campus is based around its public space network. This network creates a linked system of urban public places and the transitions between them with parks, streets and shared zones providing for vehicle and pedestrian circulations. This network is the context for experiencing the campus character.

LEGIBILITY

Legibility is central to the campus character. Legible systems, clear expression and overall cohesion will create a campus that is inspirational and memorable.
As time passes a sense of urbanity will replace the sense of a low-density campus in parkland. - Indicative plan of the developed campus.