

A letter from UWA's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education to WA High Schools (June 2020)

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis has been unprecedented. How we choose to adapt to this new reality must shape our thinking and we need to be ready when relative normality returns. One thing we know for sure, the world will not wait for us to catch up.

As you know, for 2020 school leavers this year has understandably been quite different to what they imagined. At UWA, we have responded with agility to the sudden shift caused by COVID-19, and like yourselves and many other educational institutions across the globe, have implemented multiple changes, at pace, to manage the new environment.

In the past few months, this has included a number of new initiatives to help school leavers and their families, recognising concerns about the substantial interruption to their studies and their lives in various ways.

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know about these initiatives, which provide opportunities to protect the future education pathway of this year's school leavers and to set them up for successful future employment.

New 2021 entry pathways for school leavers

As you know, UWA proactively released [new entry pathways](#) in early April to help alleviate stress for current school leavers.

While these new entry pathways are available, we expect students to complete WACE. It is extremely important preparation for tertiary studies and it's recognised nationally in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Where necessary, UWA will undertake diagnostic interviews with students to determine whether bridging units and support services are required in their first year of study to set them up for success. All communications to students from UWA will continue to reinforce the importance of maintaining focus on their studies and achieving their best possible Year 12 ATAR.

Expansion of course offerings

UWA is expanding our undergraduate course offerings in ways that respond to the medium and longer-term needs of Western Australian economy, industry and society.

Our industry and community partners have identified the need for skills that address the opportunities of automation, artificial Intelligence and robotics, as well as the social consequences of this technological transformation within WA's changing demographic profile.

We continue to offer our existing undergraduate degrees: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Biomedical Science, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Philosophy. These courses offer students a wide array of Majors and Minors so that they can personalise their study plan to suit their interest and career aspirations, while also gaining a perspective beyond their particular specialisation.

We are also expanding our course range with a variety of exciting new degrees and course options for 2021. Some examples of these new courses include a Bachelor of Automation and Robotics, a Bachelor of Advanced Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence and International Cybersecurity Majors, and a Bachelor of Business that is multi-disciplinary and includes an Enterprise and Innovation Major. Further, we have added a new Combined Bachelor and Master degree (CBM) where students can enter accelerated pathways to a Master degree level qualification, or exit after three years with an Advanced Bachelor degree.

We look forward to sharing further details of our course innovations with you in the coming months.

While we are seeing the easing of restrictions in WA, we know that the challenges faced by our current and future students will be ongoing.

It's been an overwhelming year so far for many in the community and we sincerely appreciate all the support, understanding and feedback we have received from schools. The pace and direction we are taking at UWA with the release of the new initiatives will, I believe, support high school students during a very challenging year and help protect their future.

I am committed to working with every school and have enjoyed my personal interactions with many Principals and other senior school leaders. I welcome more of these contacts so do not hesitate to contact me personally at the University. I also encourage you to contact our School Engagement Team on schools@uwa.edu.au to discuss any of our initiatives for school leavers and their future opportunities with UWA.

Yours sincerely, David

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