

Submission to the Review of Higher Education, July 2008

The Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Review of Higher Education as a critical step in promoting the centrality of higher education to Australia's social, cultural and economic well-being.

The CADAD context

The *mission* of the *Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD)* is to *promote and advance research, policy and practice* as it relates to the *leadership, management and development* of higher education learning and teaching. Membership of CADAD is open to those managing learning and teaching activities in universities. In different universities this means different things – a pro-vice-chancellor, a director of a large amalgamated centre with responsibilities covering learning assistance, IT, and the printing of resource materials, or a director of a smaller centre that focuses on developing capacity in teaching and learning expertise in schools and departments.

Twice a year Directors meet for information exchange, benchmarking and to progress specific common issues and projects. Discussion centres on how to improve teaching and learning in members' institutions and Directors compare exemplars and take examples of good practice back to their universities. CADAD believes this gives us unique influence in contributing to L&T agendas in higher education, influencing and implementing policy, undertaking professional development in pedagogical approaches, L&T strategies, and researching and promoting issues of import in HE. In responding to the Review Questions, we confine ourselves to those for which we could reasonably be expected to have a concerted and agreed opinion.

Please note that these are the views of the CADAD membership, and these statements do not purport to be the opinions of the universities which subscribe to CADAD.

Q 1.

CADAD broadly accepts the adequacy of the statement and would wish to endorse 2 ('provide opportunities for all capable students to participate'), 3 ('provide students with a stimulating and rewarding HE experience'), and 8 ('appropriately, effectively, and efficiently resourced') as key elements of the statement. In addition, we would wish to endorse the centrality of 5, 'research and innovation'.

Q2.

It should not be forgotten that teaching staff were largely airbrushed out of universities in the 1997 West report, to be replaced by global online programs which would eliminate the need for local

physical teachers. By the time of the 2002 Nelson Paper, 'Higher Education at the Crossroads', the focus returned to the **quality of teachers**, with an input measure of such quality being the possibility of mandating formal qualifications in tertiary teaching. The suggestion gained no sector support. In the present review, the lens for learning is on innovation in courses and programs, impediments and solutions.

One distinct impediment is revealed in the academic demographic (pp. 12-13 of the Discussion Paper): the ageing of the academic workforce, and lack of opportunity and incentive for potential academics. Older staff, and more particularly newer staff, need appropriate professional development in new pedagogical modes, theories and practices, and the technologies needed for time-poor students. With increasing reliance on clinical education and work-integrated learning, professional practitioners teaching into university programs, generally with minimal HE experience, need teaching development. Sessional staff are critically in need of professional development for the complex tasks of teaching, marking and grading in contemporary universities (CADAD-ALTC RED report 2008).

Current impediments to such professional development include academic workloads, the high use of sessional staff who are less available for professional development, and patchy institutional systems for professional practitioners' orientation to tertiary teaching. Removing these impediments necessarily involves adequate resourcing of HE.

Q 3. Appropriate mechanisms for ensuring HE meets needs for high level skills

CADAD strongly supports the reintroduction of an independent body for ongoing advice on HE, as per the former Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission. Such a body de-politicises the direction and funding of higher education and provides an overarching advisory board on key issues.

Q11. Evidence of impact on low participation rate students of low income support

The evidence of impact on students is not confined to identified groups but extends to the decline in Austudy eligibility more generally. Students attempt to squeeze their attendance on-campus into 3 of 5-6 days to maximise paid work time. This inevitably has a negative impact on their study time (Krause *et al.*, 2005) and leads to a lowering of outcomes. A solution would be to increase eligibility criteria for Austudy to reduce reliance on paid work.

Q12/13 Monitoring of quality of student experience and links to declining staff-student ratio

This seems to be 'the wrong question', since the previous discussion related to assessment principles (norm or criterion referenced), and entry and exit student standards.

It should be noted that there has been a strong movement beyond criterion-referenced assessment to standards-based assessment including external peer review of assessment to assure academic standards, and that most universities no longer (formally at least) use a 'norm' for grade distribution

because no assessment regime is morally defensible unless it awards grades based solely on merit.

The increasing use of sessionals who often have no training in moderation of assessment tasks or of approaches to marking and grading, may affect consistency of standards. Again, more professional development, where sessional staff are paid for attendance time by institutions, is a partial solution. The need to increase the assessment literacy and capability of staff is not limited to sessional staff, it is an area long neglected by universities. Clear evidence of program level moderation and setting of discipline standards should be a minimum requirement for all universities.

Student entry standards have been reduced in many disciplines and institutions due to poor demand. This places increasing pressure on institutions to support poorly prepared students through specialised resourcing, while also stretching pedagogic knowledge (such as scaffolding strategies) needed to support these students.

In any event, CEQ, *CEQUERY*, AUSSE and various internal evaluation instruments already measure the quality of the student experience, and universities are now using these more systematically to identify specific areas for investigation and improvement.

Q 14. How institutions measure learning outcomes, nationally and internationally

See last paragraph above. Individual institutions use benchmark data from such surveys in their course reviews, and in overall university-level reviews. They regularly undertake employer surveys of their graduates. These are reported to professional accrediting bodies as part of the accreditation process.

However, it should be noted that there are a range of ways in which the quality of learning can effectively be carried out, but they do not involve generic or standardised tests of learning or disciplines. In reviewing the extensive body of research which draws on over 40 years of data and research on standardised tests and their capacity to measure learning and the 'value added', Banta and Pike(2007) conclude that "as compelling as the concept of measuring student growth and development in college, or value added, may be, research does not support the use of standardised tests for this purpose" (p14).

Q 16. Inter-sector movement with credit: does it need improvement?

Indeed so, but that again implies more resourcing to provide bridging programs for teaching students the different learning approaches in the two sectors, as long as it does not limit the possibilities of diverse programs of study and diverse approaches to teaching and learning.

Q20/21. Should research activity be concentrated in particular types of universities

CADAD would not wish to endorse 'teaching only universities'. It **would** like to see a greater recognition of the value of 'the scholarship of teaching (Boyer) with research and scholarship into teaching a discipline at university level, and inter-disciplinary teaching pedagogies also recognised within the research quality assessment process as well. In addition, CADAD strongly endorses the importance of the teaching research nexus, not only because students value it as evidenced in CEQ rankings. Knowledge is dynamic and constantly developing so it is crucial that teaching academics are actively involved in research to stimulate higher learning in students.

Q22. Unintended consequences of internationalisation of HE

An 'unintended consequence' can certainly be identified in the huge challenges faced by Australian-born academics in understanding the needs of students from different learning cultures, by their lack of knowledge of educational systems in source countries, and their difficulty in adapting their 'Western' conceptions of learning and teaching to a diverse cohort where up to 25 per cent of a class may be international/NESB. These challenges are reinforced by their perception that 'internationalisation' = 'generation of full-fee income', not adapting curriculum to a globalised world, as in Knight's original conception of internationalisation applied to HE. The dependence of Australian universities on international fee income is well illustrated in the \$35 million decrease in international income at CQU between 2006 and 2007, with resultant loss of staff and viability. Again, professional development is needed to counter the 'problem' of teaching international students; again, time and resources for professional development are lacking. This also does not recognise the enormous value that international students and staff contribute to enriching the learning opportunities of the Australian students and community through being exposed to a range of cultural perspectives and understandings.

Q25/26. Defining knowledge transfer and community engagement

CE sits alongside R&T as a major component of a university's mission to contribute to the public good. Most universities specifically incorporate a commitment to CE, and this needs to include engagement with one's academic discipline. A separate funding mechanism for CE activities needs to be developed to encourage the full integration of R-T&L-CE, since invariably such activities require additional resources.

Q 28/29/31 Current funding models

One of the major difficulties for university resourcing has been the cessation of indexation of operating costs to accommodate salary movements. Universities cannot continue to absorb what amount to relatively small salary increases; adequate remuneration should be available for professionals.

Recruiting institutions as opposed to selecting institutions generally admit more students who are less well prepared for university study. Resources must be directed towards supplementary

learning support for these students and funding models should accommodate these differences in the name of equity and equal opportunity.

Q32. Is the sector appropriately regulated?

Although DEST/DEEWR have 'loosened' many aspects of entry to the sector to accommodate more choice by students of provider, reporting requirements are onerous to institutions. Agreeing a minimum level of reporting (and not a different level than that required by State Acts) would go far to releasing the burgeoning statistics/planning units of universities. Australia higher education is highly regulated through state and national requirements. These should be harmonised and loosened to allow for greater diversity of university mission and focus.

Q 35. What else could improve university governance?

Reinstatement of the right to staff and student representatives on Councils to reflect that they are key and core stakeholders who have a legitimate and integral role in representing their constituencies would be a major advance. Adequate representation by university staff and students on Councils is crucial to an inclusive perspective.

Minimal reporting processes on core business in teaching and learning, research and community engagement should be introduced. Councils generally concentrate on the fiduciary matters but are not privy to the management scorecard for the institution on these important matters.

CADAD Membership list

Australian Catholic University
Bond University
Central Queensland University
Charles Darwin University
Charles Sturt University
Curtin University of Technology
Deakin University
Edith Cowan University
Flinders University
Griffith University
James Cook University
La Trobe University
Macquarie University
Monash University
Murdoch University
Queensland University of Technology
RMIT University
Southern Cross University
Swinburne University of Technology
The Australian National University
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