



Response from the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, Inc (HERDSA) to the Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper.

HERDSA is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the Review of Australian Higher Education. A scholarly society with nearly 1000 members drawn from all regions across Australia (and New Zealand), HERDSA explores higher education policy and practice through its conference, publications and regular communication with members. This submission draws on the responses of HERDSA members and reflects issues raised through these forums over recent years.

A recurring theme throughout this submission is the impact of low funding on higher education's capacity to perform as it should. While the core processes to promote learning and research are still in place, this submission highlights the challenges associated with maintaining facilities, systems, relationships and innovation in a highly constrained resource environment.

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Question 1: How adequate is the statement of functions and characteristics of higher education in modern Australia?

We see higher education as an important societal contributor both through its direct input into economic growth and labour force development as well as through its operation as an agency that critiques and monitors societal trends and issues to promote improved social well-being across our nation. To this end, we recommend that the following additional contributions are made by higher education as it develops and maintains a civil and sustainable society:

- Encouraging critical enquiry across and between all knowledge domains
- Developing social capital and interchange across society and its communities
- Preserving and valuing historical and cultural knowledge.

Stemming from this, we also suggest that the following characteristics require revision as follows:

1. Meet the needs of the labour market and industry for high level skills *and guide and educate labour market and industry as to changing professional, societal and work trends.*

6. operate internationally *by influencing international practice and knowledge through overseas operations and ready interchange of knowledge and people.*

While we agree with the identified characteristics, we note the escalating challenge of achieving ambitious goals such as these when resourcing is severely curtailed. The capacity to perform as an exemplary higher education sector has been severely compromised as funding for higher education is minimised. Of great concern is the decreasing capacity to attract new academics to higher education, or to draw candidates into PhD programmes. Financial impediments may be a major factor in the decisions taken.

Section 3.1 Meeting labour market and industry needs.

Question 2: Are there impediments to the higher education sector being able to innovate in the development of courses and programs? What are these impediments and how could they be removed?

There are a number of impediments that HERDSA members identified.

- Increased student / staff ratios have decreased the capacity to spend time on curriculum development and trialling. The workloads of academics have expanded considerably as class sizes and marking loads have increased. These demands have reduced the capacity to reflect, plan and innovate. One option could be an increase in the funding allocation per student enrolment to reduce these ratios.

- In addition, new academics are not receiving the full support needed to develop their understanding of higher education pedagogy, discipline based teaching and various innovative strategies that can enhance their practice. Universities are investing heavily in the provision of foundational teaching and learning programmes for new teaching staff, with many insisting that

all staff should complete these basic teaching courses before completing their probationary period. However there is a related need to ensure the new academic is supported in the local teaching community. This support can take many forms: through a teaching and learning facilitator; peer support; a formally designated teaching and learning leader and various induction and feedback strategies. With the current resource constraints there is minimal capacity to achieve integrated support of this nature. This has lessened the impact of the centralised programmes and decreased the opportunity to innovate within teaching programmes. Innovative practices like the University of Western Australia's Teaching Internship programme for postgraduate students encourages innovation as it partners the teacher with peer support in the local community. However, these programmes are costly and not part of the standard practice in most universities.

- Universities are not only grappling with the challenges of designing curricula, but also must innovate within their programmes and courses. E-learning, work-based learning and other educational innovations must also be accommodated in our higher education communities. The costs of developing suitable systems and maintaining them are considerable. As part of this commitment, the universities must allocate staff to develop, promote and otherwise manage those systems. Australia has no sources of funding to encourage innovation of this nature, and no national or state bodies offer guidance on innovating curricula and adapting to new forms of learning.
- Innovation takes time. A new programme requires considerable investment in planning and piloting before it is fully established. Funding pressures have reduced the capacity of universities to underwrite new programmes as they establish their market niche. This has resulted in tightened timeframes for demonstrating success and greater likelihood of new programmes being phased out after only a short lead time. University processes can be cumbersome, with limited evaluation of new programmes and capacity to make adjustments to new programmes following implementation and evaluation.
- A further impediment to innovating with respect to programme development relates to the dearth of academic developers to staff central teaching and learning units. There are a number of positions currently unfilled due to a lack of suitable applicants. The absence of specialist academic staff has reduced the capacity of universities to support disciplinary groups in designing and planning effective programmes. (This could possibly be assisted by HERDSA through the provision of professional development support. However, funding support from the Government would be necessary to resource a commitment of this nature.)
- While the Australian Learning and Teaching Council is encouraging disciplinary based networks, there is little capacity to share learning about new curricula and to collaborate on joint programmes. At present Australia lacks a consolidated support strategy for promoting innovation and sharing learning and strategies. There is potential to fund inter-institutional curriculum collaboration and to promote stronger engagement on curriculum matters across institutions. National forums on curriculum reform and associated learning innovations would also be of value. These could be hosted by societies such as HERDSA with some funding support from government.

- Postgraduate courses are an important component of higher education. However, the capacity to design and sponsor the requisite piloting and implementation are increasingly challenging. Good programmes are developed after careful consultation, market analysis and review of the fields of knowledge. This has become yet another burden on overworked academics and has limited the innovation that is possible. At present higher education learning and teaching has focused on the needs of undergraduate students. The pedagogic processes for graduate instruction, and stronger clarification of the needs and learning modes of graduate students remains little explored.

Question 3: What are the appropriate mechanisms at the national and local level for ensuring higher education meets national and local needs for high level skills? What is the role of state and territory governments in this area?

Higher education is responsive to demand in that programmes are offered as long as students enrol and participate. However, student demand is not the only indicator of relevance. There is definitely more potential to work with professions, industry and local communities to identify emergent needs and respond to those requirements. Again, this process assumes that higher educators have the capacity to build relationships and work with national and local groups on curriculum reform and recasting. The reality is that increasing workloads have severely reduced the time available to consult and work with these bodies. Further, there needs to be a national approach to these discussions. While some local interaction is important, the focus on local context only is short-sighted. A globalised educational context now exists and needs to be recognised in all forms of educational reform.

A major consideration in relation to collaboration at both national and local level is the diminishing quality of higher education infrastructure. Most institutions are aware of a maintenance liability that has had to accrue and is becoming a major burden. HE funding has diminished so dramatically over the past decade that facilities and infrastructure in universities have fallen behind industry expectations. We need huge investments to bring all universities to safe workable levels. Funding sources as they stand are insufficient to accommodate these commitments.

The support of state and territory governments has been erratic, with some building strong partnerships with their universities and others offering little in the way of support or partnership. The role of state or territory government should reflect an ongoing discussion as to emergent career needs; encouragement of new curricula that support those professional or para-professional trends, and assistance to help develop those foci. Instead, we have seen governments encourage international competition into our communities and in some states there is little interaction between the state and higher education community. This is not all attributable to the state governments: academics in higher education have experienced difficulty in finding the time to build collaborations and to bridge the divide. However, the absence of leadership in state governments has been a major impediment in working together. For example, a liaison unit within each state education portfolio would be an important advancement.

There is considerable potential to build stronger relationships with professions and industry. Again, these interactions require dedicated time and a capacity to respond to suggestions and initiatives. This has been one of the casualties across the higher education sector as the pressure to

publish and teach larger numbers has reduced the time available to work across the wider community.

Question 4: How adequate are the mechanisms for aligning supply and demand of graduates? How do pricing and market signals impact on student choices?

- Across the nation universities are redesigning their structures and related curricula. We are seeing a major change in the ways in which institutions manage their supply and output of graduates. The capacity to offer small cohort-based programmes or low-demand elective specialist units has significantly diminished. This has greatly affected student choice, and will continue to be evident in the outcomes from institutional reviews of curricula. While there is benefit in working with sizes that are economically justifiable, the push toward viability can impact on some of higher education's more altruistic functions. Physics, languages and some areas of humanities have been severely threatened by a cost-focused justification model. Some industries have cyclical needs. Universities need to 'carry' some courses during their down times until demand rises again. The information technology sector is one example of these ebbs and flows. The obligation of higher education to preserve knowledge domains for the future may be neglected if the only justification for a continuing presence is through demand by students. The costing basis of government funding also neglects to recognise the higher costs associated with maintaining small demand specialist areas which are nevertheless nationally important.
- A further issue evident in our current system relates to the allocation of HECS places. The allocation of places in the past has not reflected student demand in several regions, thereby resulting in loss of access by students to desirable programmes. Any changes to the HECS system need to be sensitive to the needs of students wishing to choose their institution based on quality and other drivers, not available spaces. Obviously, this may have an impact on less successful institutions. A market-driven approach does encourage stronger monitoring of student demand.
- The increase in HECS and the necessity to cost shift has impacted on students. We see a major growth in students electing to study at a slower rate to accommodate their work demands, or moving to the use of online services in lieu of lectures. In Queensland and Western Australia there has been a significant challenge from the resources boom, with large numbers of youth electing to work rather than study. This poses a new dilemma for higher education, which has traditionally anticipated on-campus attendance of students. The capacity to provide an education via online or distance modes has re-emerged as a challenge again facing higher education in these states. These are exciting options, particularly if they are explored in collaboration with the industries that are recruiting these students.
- While higher education has a responsibility to develop and provide relevant and challenging learning programmes, it is also important to recognise that the provision of contextually strong education is reliant on industry input and understanding of what higher education does. This has an implication for how universities liaise with industry and share their programme design and outcome principles. Conversely, industries need to take some responsibility for inducting new employees into their own culture and provide training as to specific skill sets. With respect to international students and their capacity to move into paid employment in Australia, there is

considerable work to be done in identifying the necessary skills for employability and encouraging the development of the necessary capabilities (e.g. communication, social interaction, working in Australian workplaces.) Whether this is the role of higher education or a federal government agency is perhaps something to be further debated.

Question 5: Are there particular examples of good practice where you can demonstrate either rapid response to skill shortages or successful initiatives to improve generic skills?

ALTC projects are showing some sound outcomes in this area. However, the ALTC database and reports of research need to be more accessible to allow easy recovery.

Question 6: How effectively are Australian higher education institutions responding to demographic change, especially in providing lifelong learning to meet the challenge of the ageing population and the need for upgrading of skills and re-training?

- Higher education certainly has embraced the concept of lifelong learning and the need to encourage ongoing learning through the individual's lifetime. However, the ageing demographics are perhaps not yet fully recognised, with a strong focus on school leavers still very evident. The contraction of funding has reduced the focus on postgraduate coursework – an area where qualified students can re-engage with new pursuits or career changes. Further, the strong focus on studying on campus remains evident, despite evidence of a shift in student patterns of attendance.
- In recognition of student preferences to review classes online, universities have expended significant funds on online learning. However, these are often provided as an adjunct to other support on campus. There remains a significant need to further invest in refined forms of online learning to better assist regional and remote communities in their learning.
- The linkage between higher education and professional organisations remains somewhat tenuous, primarily driven by accreditation reviews or major changes to professional practice. The funding pressures on universities have required significant curriculum reform – a process that is not always assisted by professional organisations that may be strongly content driven. Discussions of changes and an understanding of the drivers for change need to be encouraged. It is also notable that the prevailing model is one where students are city-based. A stronger focus on rural and remote regional needs would be of value.
- Members also noted the need to build more flexible learning options for those seeking lifelong learning as 'just in time' and 'just for me'. The mechanisms by which funding is managed limit broad ranging options for study, although some universities do offer access on a single unit basis. If one looks at the Open University, it is clear that there is considerable potential to expand Australia's repertoire for the wider community. (Perhaps there is potential for a national online university which might broker the various offerings from different universities?)

Section 3.2: Opportunities to participate in higher education

Question 8: Should there be a national approach to improving Indigenous and low SES participation and success in higher education

- The challenge of encouraging Indigenous and low SES students to university does need ongoing consideration and support. There needs to be greater collaboration between government agencies, indigenous communities and universities to explore how this might be achieved. Universities with successful programmes should be encouraged and supported through a range of mechanisms: funding to assist special programmes; recognition in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund assessment process, and support for those who have a high proportion of these students.
- To date there seems to have been little sharing of strategies to address this issue. There is potential for supporting the development of a national collaborative strategy to share practices and learning. This could be supported through the ALTC or a higher education society such as HERDSA.

Question 9: If you support a national approach to Indigenous and low SES participation and success, how do you see it being structured, resourced, monitored and evaluated?

- We recommend a national forum (possibly hosted by ALTC) drawing together the key stakeholders in this debate – particularly those who have managed to graduate despite their social background. Issues to address in the forum could include:
 - o Successful educational approaches currently employed in Australia
 - o Sharing resources and practices
 - o Potential mechanisms for collaboration
 - o Successful international strategies
 - o Possible recruitment / relationship strategies.
- One member also suggested that the demographic analyses for SES are not always accurate, particularly in Canberra and Sydney where some postcodes have wide diversity of inhabitants.

Question 10: What institutional initiatives have proved successful in increasing low SES or Indigenous participation and success?

- Participation is perhaps the major challenge. There are many good support structures once students enrol, however the recruitment initially is the challenge. It is clear that the relationship between the university and schools is a major factor in attracting students. This has implications for work-based learning for existing students, and for the development of outreach programmes that link university to school and community. There is considerably more work that could be done in this area of helping students envisage their life as a university student.
- At present the linkage between TAFE and university is limited. There is considerable potential to build more pathways between these institutions, particularly as TAFE communities are often

more regionally based and more able to draw Indigenous or low SES students into their sphere. Universities should perhaps collaborate more on this issue with TAFE colleagues?

- Remote area/community teacher education programme and social work indigenous liaison offices are also successful practices enacted at James Cook University. They demonstrate the possibilities if universities are able to expand their mode of teaching and interaction.
- Successful programmes demonstrate the success of building consistent and accessible contact with students that goes beyond academic expectations to support them in a holistic manner. The establishment of explicit support structures with and for students also assists in retaining students. The ALTC awards have profiled many good indigenous programmes. However, the support for low SES students is less well established – particularly once the student has been enrolled in the university.

Question 11: What evidence is available from institutions about the impact on individuals and groups of either failure to gain income support or the inadequacy of income support?

- The Australian Union of Students offers some concerning statistics about students and their need to undertake paid work while studying. With the limited income support students can attain, they are forced to work while studying. The cost of petrol, rent and food is significant, and this has placed additional pressure on them. The lengthening of undergraduate programmes to four or five years is also a major pressure on students. In some cities accommodation has also become increasingly difficult to access. Textbooks, handouts and other curricula requirements have all become large commitments for students.
- The limited access to scholarships and the limited scope of those scholarships do little to encourage students to attend university (particularly if they are from low SES backgrounds where familial support will be limited.) While HECS defrays the cost of studying a course, the broader liabilities are significant and daunting.
- As studies of higher education participation have demonstrated, both access and adequacy are an issue.
- The current support through the youth allowance scheme makes it difficult to qualify. This has also proven an impediment to students who are trying to be independent while studying.

Section 3.3: The Student Experience of Higher Education

Question 12: How can the quality of the student experience within Australia's higher education institutions be monitored nationally? Is there evidence that declining student / staff ratios have impacted on the quality of the student experience?

There is no question that burgeoning student / staff ratios are impacting on the quality of the student experience. Tutorial sizes have expanded to the point where tutors are unlikely to know the names of their students. Students at risk of failing are unlikely to be noted and assisted. In first year especially, we know that there are many students who are at risk and will receive little support and encouragement from lecturers who are under pressure to keep on top of their many demands. An undergraduate student is likely to have few close contacts with their teachers during the course of their studies. Assessment practices have altered, with some disciplines resorting to a single examination as the method of student evaluation. This has greatly reduced the calibre of learning opportunities offered to those students, who might receive minimal or no feedback in their course of study.

The massification of courses to build larger student cohorts to achieve economies of scale must also be seen as another challenge in building a quality experience for students. Large lectures reduce the capacity to interchange ideas or question the lecturer. In some cases, the facilities are also poorly designed for these learning contexts.

A further concern relates to the type of staff with whom students come in contact. The casualisation of academic work to cope with diminishing funding has meant that many students are not interacting with core staff in the university, but are exposed to people who may have a very limited knowledge of the wider university mission, its goals, services and standards. This is a real issue facing all universities, bringing further challenges to providing a quality learning experience. While many sessional teachers are known to be dedicated long-term members of their teaching community, there is strong evidence of their marginalisation from the academy. This too impacts on the likely quality of the offerings. Further, the need to manage teams of tutors places additional load on the full-time academic. Administrative support has diminished considerably, thereby placing further pressure on academics to manage, administrate and teach their programme offerings. This adds further pressure to already challenged academics.

The impact on academics' well-being must be noted. Academics are experiencing significant pressure to provide high quality learning experiences in a context where there is insufficient time to innovate and learning new strategies or to build a relationship with students. It is not only students who suffer from this concerning staff/student ratio.

Question 13: How can the quality of learning outcomes in Australian higher education be measured more effectively?

- Quality relates to the whole student experience – encompassing academic experience, the cultural and social environment; support for student needs, library and online resources, counselling services, student clubs, sport clubs and health and well-being support. A major issue over the last few years has stemmed from the VSU system now implemented across Australian higher education. This decision has significantly impacted the quality of student experience in our universities, with the better endowed universities managing to prop services up, while the poorer segment has taken the hard decision to let services go. The impact on student well being and development is significant.
- The desire to measure quality is challenged by many different aspects. If quality relates to a whole of institution focus, measurement needs to move beyond crude measures and to take account of the student backgrounds, needs and community context. The use of portfolios or compacts can take account of these contextual accountabilities.
- In terms of the curriculum there is capacity to review how assessment in higher education is managed, how benchmarking might operate as a validation tool, and the ways in which curriculum needs to operate as a locally designed context as well as reflective of broader disciplinary perspectives.
- When reviewing quality matters, we recommend that consideration be given to focusing on how an institution “value adds”. The student characteristics and background data should be recognised in any review of quality.

Question 14: How do institutions measure the quality of their learning outcomes and how do they know they are nationally and internationally competitive?

In the first instance we need to be clear about the factors that comprise quality of learning. We suggest that this construct comprises various elements: the degree to which an institution's generic skills are developed; the course outcomes; the overall student learning (which may include a student portfolio documenting the out-of-class experiences that have influenced the student); and the overall social and personal growth of the individual. The AUSSE (ACER) student engagement measures offer some potential to develop a more holistic approach to measuring quality.

Secondly, there needs to be recognition that the indicators of quality may be proxy measures at best.

Section 3.4: Connecting with other education and training sectors

Question 15: To what extent should vocational education and training and higher education continue to have distinctive missions and how should these missions be defined?

The Australian higher education community has been enriched by the development of dual sector institutions. These communities have faced many challenges in working across two sectoral and regulatory systems. More generally, VET and higher education rarely interact. The push from TAFE to be recognised for their applied research indicates that this is a time where more engagement could be beneficial. However, the binary system at present limits TAFE educator engagement with higher education bodies. This is unfortunate, as the supportive infrastructure of universities (such as teacher training courses and e-learning units) offer some important sources of learning for TAFE teachers. Discussions as to curricula and skill development could also generate some important insights. Where universities have integrated TAFE institutions, the complexities of management have been significant as a result of the dual sector regulatory framework. This has reduced the capacity to integrate learning from each sector with the other. There is considerable potential to increase interaction and collaboration.

Pathways should be open and clearly articulated. We see great value in regular interaction across the two sectors. The missions are quite separate at present and this is unfortunate, as there is capacity to build more collaborative approaches to curricula and the transition of students from TAFE to higher education. The first step should be to encourage more widespread interaction and to explore the mutual and distinct interests.

Question 16: Does the movement between the sectors of students with credit need to be improved? If so, in what ways?

- There is a general consensus that the two sectors are not sufficiently articulated. There are many requirements that must be met to allow transition to higher education. The interests of the learner should be a priority.

- A second challenge relates to the variability in credit transfer processes across different institutions, creating uncertainty and inconsistency in recognition processes. However, this may not be readily resolved. As a basic strategy, there is benefit in articulating minimum thresholds of learning qualifications to facilitate movement across the two sectors.
- At present there is little capacity to review this articulation and to build some common understanding. This level of collaboration is not likely to occur unless the pressure to draw revenue is lessened through either general funding or targeted funding to encourage collaboration of this nature.

Question 17: To what extent should relative provision between the [VET and Higher Education] sectors be planned or demand driven? What are the effects of current differences on funding, governance and regulation in limiting planning or influencing choice between the sectors?

We would not wish to see overly strong government regulation of any collaboration. However, the value of the interaction could be signalled through funded support to assist those who see benefit in building a more cohesive framework for tertiary education. Financial incentives can be helpful encouragement. The provision of a funding round to encourage collaboration increases the focus and priority of this initiative. While staff may see the value in collaboration, the extrinsic benefits to the university need to be evident to make the effort worthwhile and to increase its valuing and recognition in the institution.

A possible approach might be to encourage ALTC funding to support projects where collaborative or articulated curricula are developed. The sharing of good practice, joint curricula, guidelines for transition / curriculum design etc could be encouraged through this agency.

The experience of Victoria University is clear evidence of the complexity of governance and funding which operates at present. Any review of the processes would need to take account of these challenges and perhaps look further afield (e.g. New Zealand) to explore how this level of integration might operate in tertiary education institutions.

In the past, the distinction between VET and higher education was the prevalence of research in universities. In recent higher education forums VET representatives have noted that applied research is emerging in their institutions. This could be a potential area of collaboration and interchange that might be nurtured.

Question 18: Can institutions provide examples of good practices that have led to movement between the sectors with high levels of credit and good learning outcomes?

Queensland provides adult test preparation programmes to assist students to move across the sectors.

Section 3.5: Higher Education's role in the national innovation system

Question 19: By what mechanisms should research activities in Australian universities be supported?

Research is expensive. Institutions with strong research profiles devote considerable infrastructure to support these activities. In some instances the research activities are sponsored by other elements of the institution's funding to ensure all commitments are covered. A first priority should be a review of the national competitive grants scheme to identify how staff costs are paid under the grants. This would greatly assist those who are research active, by allowing staff to be paid appropriately, and to reduce the load carried by other elements of higher education activity.

Buildings and facilities for research are very costly to maintain and equip. While there has been a solid increase in funding to support this aspect of research, the accrued liabilities from the last decades mean that the available funding will be well below what is required to assist most universities in bringing their facilities up to an acceptable standard. Researchers returning from overseas consistently note their disappointment at the quality of laboratories and research facilities. A major challenge for many universities is the location of space to house research students and postdoctoral staff.

The level of scholarships for research students has also failed to match the increasing costs of living. The drop in PhD candidates across the nation highlights the unattractiveness of subsisting at this level. We recommend that scholarships be reviewed and adjusted annually to reflect the inflationary costs now so prevalent.

A final area relating to research support is that of staff development. The Group of Eight Future Research Leaders programme, funded by the Workplace Productivity Programme has illustrated the strong demand for learning how to manage research more effectively. Research staff have a range of developmental needs that are poorly met in our universities, where the research support has primarily focused on grant seeking, rather than the processes that must be implemented following the grant. Australia needs to build stronger research capacity across its research-active staff. While the Go8 resources will be made available to all Australian universities, the project has illustrated the challenges many universities will face in identifying suitable staff to host and manage programmes of this nature. This is an area of research infrastructure that requires substantially more consideration.

Question 20: On what principles and for what purposes should research activity be concentrated in particular universities or types of universities?

HERDSA believes that higher education is distinguished by its strong integration of research across the sector. This is not to say that all universities have the same research concentration. Our institutions have developed different relationships with research: ranging from research-intensive to research-reflective. Teaching intensive institutions still benefit from research activity, although the research may be applied in nature and possibly relate to the professional disciplines linked to

the university. The categorisation of universities according to their research activity therefore needs to be carefully considered, as some focus on research needs to be retained in all universities.

It is notable that research concentrations are strong where universities have a good level of endowment and related investments to support their research. The costly nature of research limits the capacity to nurture research in institutions which lack the necessary resources. The building of research intensity is both culturally and resource based. The push and drive to publish, build research relationships and collaborate on new initiatives is strongly supported by an institution's leadership, culture, expectations, performance processes, induction, support services, funding arrangements and reward / promotion structures. Staff in research-intensive universities are likely to have higher performance targets and be judged more stringently on their outcomes. This, then, generates stronger outcomes in terms of research quality and impact. Conversely, institutions with significant teaching loads will find it difficult to promote research of sufficient depth and breadth.

To be deemed research active, universities need to reflect the following principles:

1. ensure there is sufficient capacity to support the research initiative (including facilities, support services, research student recruitment, sponsorship of the research, support for research development;
2. support areas of research strength, whilst also allowing for individual research foci;
3. encourage a strong link between teaching and research;
4. teaching loads are sufficiently low to allow effective research focus; and
5. focus on quality outcomes and innovations.

Each institution determines its own mix and composition of research intensity. The current processes applied in allocating research funding reflect this self-determination and appear equitable in rewarding an institution's investment in its research activities.

Question 21: Do you believe there is a place in Australia's higher education system for universities that are predominantly 'teaching only' universities? If so, why?

- It is likely that there will be a growing number of 'teaching only' universities as non-self accrediting institutions move toward university status. In addition, there could be instances where existing universities might evolve toward this status. There can be strength in focusing on excellent teaching – as can be seen in community colleges and esteemed teaching only institutions such as Vassar and Smith in the US.
- However, it is important to recognise the importance of maintaining a continuing link between research and the curricula which are taught. Students must also be taught effective research skills to be fully functional members of the knowledge community.

Section 3.6: Australia's higher education sector in the international arena

Question 22: Are there any unintended consequences of the current approach to internationalisation of higher education in Australia?

- The internationalisation of Australian education as both a local and offshore industry has had a profound impact on our higher education operations. Initial initiatives offshore were primarily focused on reaping income, with little consideration of student well-being or reputational issues. The ongoing concerns expressed in AUQA audits demonstrate a continuing risk attached to Australia's offshore processes. Fortunately, there are now examples of well planned and strongly articulated campuses operating offshore or in partnership with other agencies. However, there is little shared learning across our sector, resulting in ongoing failures and high profile closures.
- The current approach to internationalisation is based on individual institutions funding their offshore initiatives. There is little evidence of collaboration between institutions in providing suitable resources, student support services or teaching support of offshore teachers. There is potential for a national body to encourage a collaborative approach, particularly in the provision of offshore infrastructure.
- The growth in international students attending Australian campuses has been evident over many years. The current processes offer little in the way of additional support to ESL students, with many required to manage through their own personal support strategies.
- There is potential for greater regulation of international activity. However, the first step, clarity as to what should be regulated and how, still requires delineation.

Question 23: What is an appropriate role for government in assisting the Australian higher education system to internationalise? On what principles should this role rest and what purposes should it serve?

- A stronger exchange programme to encourage Australian students studying abroad would be beneficial. Funding to support the cost of travel, accommodation and living costs would greatly assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Government could offer stronger regulatory guidelines as to financial management, partnerships with offshore agents and mechanisms for monitoring effective outcomes. These could complement the work AUQA has generated in clarifying governance and standards issues that should be reflected in offshore operations.
- The ALTC has the potential to explore the educational issues relating to internationalisation through grants, seminars and its online resources. This would also assist in sharing better practice.

- Collaboration in generating resources, common curricula and infrastructure could also be assisted by government.

Section 3.7: Higher Education's contribution to Australia's economic, social and cultural capital.

Question 25: How would you define knowledge transfer and community engagement in an Australian context?

- While the academy possesses many areas of expertise and knowledge, it is strongly reliant on regular interchange with other members of the community. It cannot operate effectively in a vacuum. Community engagement requires an open and respectful interaction between the parties. Knowledge transfer is a dynamic interactive process where different stakeholders share their perspective and experience.

Question 26: Do you believe that knowledge transfer and community engagement are legitimate and appropriate roles for contemporary higher education institutions? If so, how do you see this additional role for the higher education sector blending with its traditional roles and are there limits to these additional roles?

- Knowledge transfer implies a “repository” approach to education. The dynamic interchange between the academy and community recognises the various contributions all can make. Universities do not have all of the “knowledge” to be generated. They are certainly incubators of knowledge, but the overall goal of a university education is the process skills that enable the student to be a critical and creative thinker. Our universities are knowledge communities which reside in a larger microcosm of knowledge stakeholders. Academe offers one source of knowledge, but it is greatly enriched by other avenues. These interactions need to be frequent and diverse –with both university staff and students.
- Universities have an important responsibility to learn more about their communities and to develop responsive approaches to drawing the community into academe, and vice versa. One mechanism to achieve this is the use of work-based learning, community outreach and consultation and various research and community collaborations.
- It would be pleasing to see greater valuing and recognition of the contribution universities make to the wider community. Publications, reports and other outputs are little valued at present in our research recognition schemes. Given the importance of investing time and energy into community engagement, recognition of the investment made by universities and their staff should be enabled.

Question 27: If you think that knowledge transfer and community engagement are appropriate roles for higher education institutions, how do you believe these functions should be funded?

- Community engagement requires a significant commitment of staff, resources, marketing, facilities and ongoing interaction. Relationships with community stakeholders require considerable dedication and management. The current funding basis for higher education has reduced the capacity to build strong and robust interchanges with local communities.
- Possibly funding might be allocated to proposals that seek to build stronger community engagement. However, the focus on pilot projects which are then not sustained for the future is short-sighted practice. There is value in providing initial pilot funding, followed by ongoing support once the pilot has demonstrated its potential. There needs to be greater recognition of the time frames which need to be followed. Sustainable activity takes time.
- Again, the successes within our sector are little publicised or shared with other institutions. It would be useful to have a forum whereby successful practice might be profiled and promulgated. AUQA's Good Practice Database offers a small subset of options, but there are many initiatives that are not widely known to others. Collaboration over innovations and initiatives would be more readily cultivated if institutions were not battling to achieve sufficient market share to survive.

Section 3.8: Resourcing the system

Question 28: What incentives or unintended consequences are there in the current arrangements for higher education funding?

There are few incentives at present. The consequences of our current funding arrangements are dire. Staff are highly stressed and overworked; facilities are poorly maintained and students are being ill-served. Our ratings in the OECD rankings illustrate the loss of parity we have experienced. It is time to re-establish a national system that can stand proudly against our international compatriots.

Section 3.9: Governance and regulation

Question 31: Is it time to reshape tertiary education in Australia and streamline financing and regulatory arrangements? If so, what structural changes would you make and why?

- Whatever is chosen – one size will never fit all. There needs to be sufficient scope to accommodate the different fits and designs that can be found across our sector. We see a broadening of institutions in the sector, thereby requiring some different standards and expectations. Some broad principles and common approaches to governance, accreditation and standards would be beneficial and would reduce the barriers between the sectors.

Question 32: Is the level of regulation in the sector appropriate? If not, why not and what should be done to reduce the level of regulation?

- The sector is over-regulated with little measurable gains in students' achievements or academic research activities. The few new incentives offered over the last few years have come with major strings attached, thereby generating further tasks and process redesigns. It is time to let universities focus on their core business, with less focus on reporting, documenting and verification.

Question 33: Does Australia's Quality Assurance framework need revision? If so, why? What changes would you make?

AUQA is a powerful agency for promoting quality assurance. The time frame of five years allows sufficient time to manage organisational change as a response to the first audit. This model appears to be working well. AUQA may experience pressure, however, as more NSAI move to be reviewed.

AUQA has revised its framework for Cycle 2 audits. This is a comprehensive set of expectations of effective institutions. An ongoing refinement of this instrument will be undertaken via feedback from institutions. This is an appropriate manner in which standards can be calibrated

Question 34: Are changes required to the Australian Qualifications framework?

More examples to illustrate what is expected would be of value.

Question 35: Is there more that could be done to improve university governance? How should this be done?

University management and leadership have improved over the last few years, although further growth and development are necessary.

Universities need to provide effective inductions and leadership programmes for those in significant roles. These are critical elements to support functional leadership. However, the funding of organisational development centres or learning units can be a low priority in times of financial stress. The most useful means of support to encourage better governance would be assistance with building stronger in-house development.

The demise of the AVCC programmes and the limited focus of the LH Martin Institute have diminished the opportunity for leadership guidance at a national level. The UK Leadership Foundation offers a shining example of what can be accomplished if there is high level national leadership and support for university management. Australia has nothing comparable to this agency, but it is a focus that is greatly needed.

Government funding could operate at both institutional and national levels: to assist universities to build their leadership capability through capacity building grants (perhaps extending on the

Workplace Productivity Programme model, but with more equal dispersal of the funding to ensure greater reach across the sector) and through the development of a national agency which is dedicated to promoting quality education, excellent leadership, and other initiatives which further Australian education.