



HIGHER EDUCATION

LIFTING THE QUALITY
OF TEACHING AND
LEARNING



**Business Council
of Australia**

● **SHAPING AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE**

“The quality and relevance of the higher education provided to students today will play a major role in determining our economic success over the next quarter of a century.”

Michael Andrew
Chairman
BCA Education, Skills and Innovation
Task Force

- To compete on the global stage into the future, Australian businesses will depend on highly educated, capable and innovative people.

Our higher education sector is responsible for delivering much of the knowledge and the capabilities we need to maintain a strong, productive economy for the benefit of all Australians.

At a time when we need to be continuing to improve the quality of higher education teaching and learning, the sector is facing a number of important challenges.

The sector is in the process of implementing the Bradley reforms, including the move to a demand-driven model for the allocation of places, which is driving a rapid increase in domestic undergraduate enrolments.

The Bradley reforms include a target for enrolling more students from low socio-economic and disadvantaged backgrounds. The BCA views this as an important reform.

Also, many institutions are attempting to address and turn around a very large decline in international student numbers, and to restore confidence in one of the nation's most important export industries.

At the same time, the sector continues to face the crucial challenge of ensuring that learning outcomes are relevant to the requirements of workplaces that are increasingly operating as part of global networks.

These developments mean that our higher education system is at an important juncture. Throughout the course of this year and next, a clear focus on the most important outcomes will be required.

The BCA's Education, Skills and Innovation Task Force influences and informs policy reform to improve the quality of education and training in Australia.

We work to influence reforms that will give Australians world-class education and skills development throughout their lives, and make a vital contribution to national productivity.

ENHANCING HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

As the Australian Government implements important reforms to increase participation in higher education, it is essential that institutions have the capacity to continue to improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning, and to deliver the graduates Australia needs to lift productivity and community prosperity.

Business strongly supports the value of increasing participation rates in higher education, but this increase must not come at the expense of quality teaching and learning.

The productivity performance of every business depends on the ability of people with up-to-date knowledge who can work effectively with others, make use of new ideas and contribute to innovation. Increasingly this is taking place in workplaces that are globally connected and with people who are international in their outlook and have the capabilities to match.

The Productivity Commission has highlighted that the productivity performance of every business is strongly linked to the preparedness of the people

who lead and work in the business to engage in continual learning, to experiment within their organisation and to respond to customer demands. This accords with the experience of BCA members.

As a result, the knowledge and capabilities that individuals have gained, and continue to derive from their undergraduate and postgraduate education, can and do make a vital contribution to the productivity performance of Australian businesses. This must include the generic skills necessary for individuals to be successful in the workplace, which include teamwork, communication, and other interpersonal skills.

Furthermore, the capacity of the higher education sector to broadly meet industry demands for qualified people in key professions and occupations will also be important.

The BCA recognises that broader issues such as university governance and financing structures contribute to the sector's capacity to improve quality and relevance, and will consider these matters in later work.

As a starting point, however, the BCA recommends the development of a framework that encourages institutions to lead efforts to enhance their teaching and learning quality.

This framework should also enable increased diversity and the opportunity for institutions to specialise and to build national and international centres of excellence.

Australia's higher education policies must recognise that the quality and relevance of the teaching and learning experience of Australian higher education students are dependent on effective teaching, up-to-date curriculum and learning outcomes that are valued in the community and in our workplaces.

In supporting this framework, higher education institutions, the federal government, regulatory bodies, and business all have important responsibilities.

The BCA's higher education teaching and learning priorities are:

1. REWARD EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES THROUGH:

- the further development of performance funding arrangements, with eligibility for funding contingent on institutions providing evidence of improving teaching performance taking into account their priorities and circumstances
- examining the feasibility of benchmarking the teaching and learning performance of higher education as the basis for the future recognition of effective teaching. This should include the completion of a cost-benefit analysis as a key component of the feasibility study
- encouraging institutions to better recognise and reward professional development undertaken by academic teachers, including the teaching of international capabilities and effective teaching practices for the education of students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- encouraging institutions to extend institutional arrangements for recognising and rewarding the teaching performance of academics.

2. FURTHER IMPROVE THE VALUE AND THE RELEVANCE OF WHAT IS TAUGHT THROUGH:

- increased engagement with business on curriculum, to ensure a shared understanding of the knowledge, technical skills and generic skills graduates will need to enable them to work in diverse and cross-disciplinary teams. This should involve:
 - supporting the work of the Business/Higher Education Roundtable, especially in identifying and promoting best practice examples of business-higher education engagement
 - continuing to utilise advisory committees and course review panels

- enabling institutions to specialise and to create national and international centres of excellence
- greater internationalisation of the curriculum, which includes building on the linkages with institutions in other countries, especially in Asia.

3. DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY TO ENABLE AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION INDUSTRY TO GROW SUSTAINABLY THROUGH:

- student visa requirements and procedures that compare favourably with nations such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom
- providing increased incentives for international students to learn and develop English language proficiency
- arrangements to support greater interaction between Australian and international students.

4. DEVELOP A DEMAND-DRIVEN SYSTEM THAT IS RESPONSIVE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS AS WELL AS STUDENTS BY:

- supporting Skills Australia to lead annual consultations with industry, higher education and government regarding national higher education priorities
- the timely provision of information about the employment outcomes of higher education graduates according to the qualifications completed.

The BCA's Education, Skills and Innovation Task Force appreciates the ongoing, constructive engagement it is having with vice-chancellors and higher education leaders on how to deepen linkages between the sectors.



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