
DASSH Response to the Inquiry into School to Work Transition

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training's inquiry into school to work transition.

DASSH represents humanities, arts and social science (HASS) disciplines across 37 Australian universities. While the number of graduates in other fields is rapidly growing, it is still the case in Australia that the largest proportion of tertiary graduates are those whose broad education is in HASS disciplines. The HASS tertiary-trained population represents 60.4% of all Australians with a Bachelor degree or higher qualification,¹ with humanities and commerce being the disciplines in highest demand for tertiary study.²

There is no denying that work and the workforce is undergoing a profound change. With the rise of digitisation, globalisation and collaboration, workforces are becoming more diverse and require an equally diverse skillset to succeed. No longer can young people expect to train for and establish themselves in one career over their working life. Instead, universities and career advisors now encourage young people to expect to have “portfolio” careers made up of a chain of employment across five or ten different areas of work. In order for Australia's young people to prosper in this new environment, and in turn have an Australian economy and industry that can compete on the global stage, the transition from school to work becomes critical.

There has been a worldwide shift from an agricultural, to industrial, to service-orientated economic structure. This has resulted in a decline in demand for physical labour and craft skills, and a rise in demand for knowledge and interpersonal skills.³ Over the past five years, the Australian government policy in response to this workforce change is to advocate for the investment in “hard” or “technical” skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). This was encapsulated in the government's National Innovation and Science Agenda, which proclaimed that STEM was “Australia's future”.⁴ However, research has found that the occupations most under threat are manual and routine tasks susceptible to automation. Conversely, opportunity for employment in jobs requiring skills that humans excel at, using non-routine interpersonal and analytical skills, is at an all-time high.⁵

Rather than discrete vocations, research has found that skills-based job clusters are the best way to conceptualise the new employment market.⁶ HASS graduates excel in the skills aligned with these more resilient areas of employment. DASSH is responding to this research by identifying the future workforce needs and the importance of HASS attributes in filling those needs. A preliminary report on how HASS graduates will enhance the workforce of the future has been produced. The findings provide useful data for school careers officers, guidance counsellors, and teachers in the value of

¹ Australian Academy of the Humanities (2014) *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia*, p. 13

² Norton, A. & Cakitaki, B. (2016) *Mapping Australian higher education 2016*, Grattan Institute, pg. 7

³ OECD (2012) *Better skills, better jobs, better lives: A strategic approach to skills policies*.

⁴ Office of the Chief Scientist (2014) *Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths: Australia's Future*. Australian Government, Canberra.

⁵ Accenture (2016) Trend 2. Liquid Workforce: Building the workforce for today's digital demands. *Technology Vision 2016*; Foundation of Young Australians (2016a) *The New Basics*, p. 9

⁶ *Ibid.*

post-school tertiary education in the HASS disciplines. DASSH would be happy to present our research to the committee at a later stage if desired.

1. Measurements of gain in school and how this contributes to supporting students to prepare for post-school education and training

With an increasing focus on knowledge and interpersonal skills rather than specific technical skills, a student's ability to showcase attainment and progress in these areas is important in the transition to work. However, the attainment of these skills is one area where students, including university graduates are self-reporting a lack (or underdevelopment) of. In a recent study by Infosys, half of 16-25 year olds surveyed in Germany, Australia and the US believe that their education did not adequately prepare them for working life.⁷ Almost 80% of respondents from the UK, Australia and the US reported that on entering employment, they had to retrain or learn new skills.⁸ DASSH supports the Infosys report's recommendation that equal weight needs to be placed on soft and hard knowledge-based skill development and that the necessary learning structures and systems are put in place to ensure skill acquisition in this area.

2. Opportunities to better inform and support students in relation to post-school education and training, including use of employment outcomes of students who undertake school-based vocational education or post-school tertiary pathways

DASSH is committed to ensuring multiple pathways for admission to universities, recognising both the value to individuals, communities and the nation of access to higher education and the variety of prior educational, employment, family and other circumstances that cannot be appropriately dealt with through a single admission pathway. We welcome the government's continued commitment for people from disadvantaged backgrounds in providing pathways to tertiary education. As stated in our submission in 2016 on the government's [Driving Innovation, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education](#) consultation paper and this year's response to the [Inquiry into the Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment \(A More Sustainable, Responsive and Transparent Higher Education System\) Bill \(2017\)](#), DASSH supports the expansion of the demand-driven system to include sub-bachelor load at public universities. However, we recommend the monitoring of the outcomes of this change, including the subsequent education and employment trajectories of these students.

With an increasing interest in employability as a key driver shaping student study decisions, DASSH supports the government's efforts to ensure greater transparency around university admission policies. Improved clarity on the full diversity of pathways to higher education, including ATARs, alternative entry options, and admissions based on combinations of entry options (for example, portfolio plus ATAR) would enable students to make more informed decisions on their transition from school. However, students also require better information on graduate employment outcomes.

DASSH recommends that the Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) website extends their longitudinal survey of graduate outcomes to five years beyond graduation. Having this data available to students would offer more meaningful information than the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) with its focus on outcomes four months after graduation. In addition, to be able to

⁷ Infosys (2016) *Amplifying Human Potential: Education and Skills for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, p. 8

⁸ *Ibid*, p.12

provide comprehensive information on graduate employment outcomes, the response rate to the GDS needs to increase or another means of obtaining this data needs to be implemented (for example, [New Zealand's Employment Outcomes of Tertiary Education policy](#) where from July 2017, Tertiary Education Providers will have to publish information on the employment status and earnings of their graduates).

Professor Susan Dodds

President

Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)

31 July 2017

About DASSH

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) is the authoritative agency on research, teaching and learning for the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in Australian and New Zealand universities.

DASSH supports those within these institutions who have responsibility for the governance and management of research and teaching and learning in their universities. DASSH also supports those who aspire to these positions through a Network of Associate Deans (International), a Network of Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) and a Network of Associate Deans (Research).