

DASSH Response to the Call for Submissions to the Education and Employment Committee's Inquiry into innovation and creativity: workforce for the new economy

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Education and Employment Committee's Inquiry into innovation and creativity: workforce for the new economy.

Much of the national dialogue concerning higher education and the nation's economic future tends to overlook the significant role and contribution of the arts, social sciences and humanities (ASSH). This is unfortunate given that ASSH graduates account for over 60% of Australia's tertiary educated population with employment levels, according to the Beyond Graduation Survey, comparable with the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.¹ Moreover in a rapidly changing economy where career patterns are no longer as stable as they once might have been, the long term value of more generalist degrees in the ASSH disciplines is evident not just in Australia, but within other similar OECD economies.²

Secondly, ASSH disciplines too make a 'major contribution to the national research and innovation system' and to the social innovation and entrepreneurship which is essential to a flourishing economy.³ With the continuing growth of the services and creative sectors, the value and importance of the ASSH disciplines is increasing not declining. The new economy is defined by the 'growing importance of creative production and cultural consumption'.⁴ Yet none of this would be entirely evident from some of the public discussion concerning the national innovation strategy.

Given that universities are educating students for the jobs of today and of the future and given the fundamental role that the ASSH disciplines play in a flourishing economy, it is essential that representatives from the ASSH sector continue to be consulted and included in the development and implementation of national policy and strategy in regard to the tertiary system's role in educating the nation's workforce for the new economy.

1. The extent to which students are graduating with the skills needed for the jobs of today and of the future

While technical knowledge related to their job is highly desirable for employers, for many positions, what employers need from recent graduates are transferable skills and 'real-world' experience. Good teamwork, decision-making and communication skills, and the

¹ Turner, G., and Brass, K. (2014). *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia*. Australian Academy of the Humanities, Canberra, p.31.

² Ibid, p.90; Leech-Wilkinson, R. (2013). *What Do Social Science Graduates Do?* Campaign for Social Science, UK; Holm, P., Jarrick, A., and Scott, D. (2015). *Humanities World Report 2015*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

³ Turner, G., and Brass, K. (2014). p.90.

⁴ Bakhshi, H., Schneider, P., and Walker, C. (2008). *Arts and Humanities Research and Innovation*. AHRC/ Nesta, London, p.31.

ability to plan and prioritise work appear at the top of lists worldwide of skills employers value when surveyed about recruiting recent graduates.⁵ As a recent Deloitte Report concluded, 'the Australian economy of the future will not just require workers with the traditional 'higher skills' rather we will require a workforce of creative, innovative and highly adaptable knowledge workers'.⁶ This has been consistently repeated in the Australian context, including during a number of sessions held at the most recent Universities Australia conference, and on the whole, Australian students appear to be graduating with these skills.

In the pilot of the Employer Satisfaction Survey (EES) conducted in 2013-14 by the Workplace Research Centre at the University of Sydney and ORC International on behalf of the Department of Education and Training, the results were overwhelmingly positive. Among graduates, 84.5 per cent answered that they thought their qualification prepared them well or very well for their current job. Among their supervisors, 92.4 per cent answered that they would be fairly confident or very confident in recommending someone with the same qualification for a position similar to the graduate's current role.⁷ In general, the technical skills of graduates were rated highly by both graduates (67%) and supervisors (86%), though the study found that employer satisfaction with technical skills was rated lower than for other factors.⁸

While current levels of employer satisfaction are high for graduate attributes, DASSH warns against becoming complacent. Universities need to continue to work with industry and employers to produce graduates with transferable skills and 'real-world' experience to remain internationally competitive. We also need to equip students to better understand and articulate the transferable skills they have developed through their studies – from project management through stakeholder negotiation and communication – in order to reduce barriers to rewarding employment that draws on the skill and expertise of graduates.

The embedding of Work Integrated Learning (WIL), internships and industry placements within a degree, be it undergraduate or [postgraduate](#) is vital in order to achieve these skills. DASSH supports the Australian Collaborative Education Network Limited's (ACEN) [National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education](#) developed in collaboration with Universities Australia, Australian Chamber of Commerce (ACCI),

⁵ See for example, Adams, S. (2014). "The 10 Skills Employers Most Want In 2015 Graduates". *Forbes*, 12 November 2014. Available at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2014/11/12/the-10-skills-employers-most-want-in-2015-graduates/#4579726a19f6>; Molloy, F. (2015). "Top 10 things employers look for in university graduates". *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 2015. Available at <http://www.smh.com.au/national/tertiary-education/top-10-things-employers-look-for-in-university-graduates-20150112-12mb73.html>; and National Association of Colleges and Employers (2015). *Job Outlook 2016*. Available at <http://www.naceweb.org/s11182015/employers-look-for-in-new-hires.aspx>.

⁶ Deloitte Access Economics (2015). *The importance of universities to Australia's Prosperity*, pp.46-47. Available at <http://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/importance-universities-australias-prosperity.html>

⁷ Oliver, D., Freeman, B., Young, C., Yu, S. & Verma, G. (2014). *Employer Satisfaction Survey. Report for the Department of Education, June 2014*, p.61. <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/35889>

⁸ Ibid, p.62.

Australian Industry Group (AIG) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA). Compared with many other OECD countries, there is less extensive partnering between industry and universities in Australia, both for the purposes of education and of research across all disciplines. Further, due to the nature of some ASSH degrees, WIL is not as entrenched in a number of our subjects as in many professional or vocational degrees. There is a need for greater opportunities for partnerships with industry over the course of our students' degree.

DASSH is a keen promoter of WIL, experiential learning and industry engagement. Across our member institutions there are myriad examples of innovative practice in all these respects from embedding WIL in the curriculum to consultative boards, which bring industry, professionals and academics together in the development of new programs. In a number of disciplines the appointment of Professors of Practice or equivalent is a valuable mechanism for enhancing both direct industry/professional engagement and student employability skills.

DASSH recognises that there needs to be a cultural change in the university and industry relationship with respect to WIL. The initiative needs to come from both within the university (see key area 5 of the National Strategy) and from industry (see key area 6 of the National Strategy). Only through widening and deepening such collaboration will the national strategy be successful, and importantly, for all sectors of the Australian economy and all sections of Australian society.

3 Factors that discourage closer partnerships between industry; in particular small and medium enterprises, the research sector and education providers; including but not limited to: intellectual property; technology transfer; and rapid commercialisation

The National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA)

It is important to emphasise that NISA recognises the significance of the ASSH disciplines to the new economy. However, there is a tendency, as noted in the introductory comments, for public discussion to adopt a partial and restrictive understanding of innovation, which overlooks the importance of social innovation and the role of the ASSH disciplines in the creative economy. As a recent international report observes 'social innovation on the one hand and technology driven innovation are both essential elements in the creation of the new research-centred ecology for the twenty first century'.⁹ The NISA declares too that, 'innovation is important to every sector of the economy'. DASSH notes the importance of adopting a broad rather than a narrow conception of 'innovation' and ensuring that this message is understood and promoted by government and the agencies responsible for implementing the national strategy.

⁹ Science Europe Scientific Committee for the Humanities (2015). *Radical Innovation: Humanities Research Crossing Knowledge. Boundaries and Fostering Deep Change*: D/2015/13.324/1, p.3. Available at http://www.scienceeurope.org/uploads/PublicDocumentsAndSpeeches/SCsPublicDocs/151222_HUMAN_OP_Radical_Innovation_web.pdf

The Research and Development Tax Incentive

The Research and Development (R&D) Tax Incentive is extremely important in minimising barriers to collaboration. As we have noted in [submissions to other government reviews](#), there are a number of barriers to collaboration by humanities, arts and social science researchers with businesses, including the explicit exclusion of HASS research from the current R&D tax incentives. In the past, HASS research, which may have commercial or wider economic impact, has been excluded from eligibility for particular publicly funded research support (e.g. Super Science Fellowships, International Science Linkages and, in the past, CRCs, and NCRIS). In a rapidly changing world in which complex problems demand multidisciplinary approaches, excluding certain disciplines or sectors is counter-productive.

Internships within start-ups

There is a lot of conflicting information, both within industry and universities, about the legality of start-ups working with unpaid interns. For example, some DASSH members have reported advice from Fair Work Australia that in regard to internships, start-ups are treated like any other organisation. This means that if they were to bring on board students for internships, they would be legally required to pay the students a wage for their work. Given the nature of a start-up and the fact that they are not yet profit-generating in the early stages, a paid internship is not often viable for them to offer. A large number of our students recognise the value of gaining experience working in start-ups for the degrees or are involved in setting up their own start-ups. Some similar issues have been reported in relation to internships in the not for profit sector. Whilst most universities have their own policies in relation to these issues, DASSH recommends clear sector guidelines and practices in relation to the employment of interns, and distinctions on what constitutes a paid and an unpaid internship.

Support for university-industry engagement

Universities are complex businesses and sometimes lack clearly defined strategies for industry engagement. In order to provide both universities and industry with streamlined, user-friendly processes, DASSH recommends that universities have single dedicated portals through which small businesses and industry can engage.

Government support for industry-collaboration within higher research degrees

As stated in point 1 above, there needs to be a cultural change within universities and industry concerning the value and worth of research in the ASSH sector to industry. In [DASSH's submission to Australian Council of Learned Academies \(ACOLA\)'s Review of Australia's Research Training System](#), one of our recommendations to address this challenge was that a proportion of government funded scholarships could be allocated for industry-collaborations or specific challenges, and perhaps developing professional doctorate or post-doctoral scholarships that are funded specifically for industry challenges (i.e., an ARC Linkage/DECRA-style scheme to fund PhD graduates to work with industry). This would help ensure some HDR scholarship is focused and aligned to contemporary industry-specific challenges. Candidates would come from professional/industry background and thus have the potential to strengthen the relationship with industry. Their goal is to innovate in their field of expertise, and re-position themselves within their profession.

An example of how support for professional doctorates could more readily develop links with industry, researchers studying the Doctorate of Creative Industries (DCI) at QUT are focused on designing, implementing and evaluating professional practice research projects – with this analysis and reflection on professional practice having a tangible impact in industry. Allocating specific scholarship funding towards the more professionally orientated doctorates is a straight-forward and impactful way to enhance the industry relevance of research.

In the US various initiatives have been taken to widen the career pathways of traditional PHD students. The Public Fellows Program, which is a collaboration between the American Council of Learned Societies and the Mellon Foundation, supports a transition pathway to nonacademic careers in the public and private sectors.¹⁰ DASSH believes such public-private partnership initiatives would be a valuable and attractive option for many PHD students especially international students. Such a scheme could make a valuable contribution to boosting the nation's research base.

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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 (DASSH) 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 (Learning and Teaching) and a Network of Associate Deans (Research).

¹⁰ American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2013). *Heart of the Matter: The Humanities and the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Mass.