State of the Social Sciences Consultation

Submission from the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation. In addition to our responses to the consultation questions detailed below, we offer the following recommendations:

- The State of the Social Sciences report should reflect the disciplinary diversity of the social sciences.

- The State of the Social Sciences report should showcase the contributions of social sciences experts from a broad range of backgrounds, genders and ethnicities, but do so without shying away from historic and ongoing inequities in the sector.

- Social sciences peak bodies should collaborate to highlight the opportunities for our disciplines in terms of graduate career prospects, technological innovations in research methodologies, and the relevance of our work to society.

- Social sciences peak bodies should undertake a mapping exercise to identify the contributions of social sciences graduates to the Australian economy and society.

- Social sciences doctoral students should be provided with more information about academic and non-academic career pathways to better support and promote postdoctoral employment prospects.

- Universities and funding bodies should be encouraged to provide more comprehensive research funding, leadership training and mentors to support mid-career social scientists.

- The academy must, in direct consultation with Indigenous peoples, fully embrace and include Indigenous peoples in the social sciences, recognise the valuable contributions and unique perspectives they bring to the disciplines, and enable and encourage future generations of Indigenous leaders and scholars.

1. If you are currently studying a social science discipline, how optimistic or pessimistic are you about your career prospects?
N/A.

2. What unique skills and capabilities do social science graduates bring to the wider economy?
Social sciences graduates are trained to approach the world with curiosity and an open mind. They are trained to question whether the way things are is the way things have to be, and to use rigorous research methods and critical thinking to understand and explain how social outcomes have eventuated and how things can change. They are able to analyse data and also appreciate its limits, what can be known definitively and what remains uncertain. While these attributes are not unique to social sciences graduates, their understanding of and focus on the social/human contexts of data and information as well as their mastery of distinct methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative sets them apart from graduates of other disciplines.

Social science graduates possess critical analytical skills and the ability to determine and interpret legitimate knowledge, practical research skills in qualitative and quantitative approaches, and sophisticated written and interpersonal communication skills. These skills are all highly adaptable and useful in all sectors of the workforce, particularly in times of rapid social change and disruption.

3. Are there current or recent examples of social science research making an impact in policy or society that we might draw out in this report?
There are many instances of social sciences research influencing policy and society in recent times, more than can be adequately represented here. It will be important for the "State of the Social Sciences" report demonstrate the diversity of the social sciences impacts on society, highlighting contributions from across relevant disciplines. Specific examples highlighted by our members include:
- The recent blending of epidemiological models and dynamic macroeconomic models to illustrate the dynamic trade-offs involved in lockdowns to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

- o The models implied large dynamic gains from early lockdowns to increase future activity while revealing severe limitations of static cost-benefit calculations. The models also provided a better understanding why social insurance policies (e.g., "JobKeeper" in Australia) are a more effective policy to prevent collapse of aggregate demand during a pandemic than traditional monetary or fiscal stimulus.
  - o Crucial to the development of such models is an understanding of modelling frameworks in different disciplines (e.g., epidemiology and economics), statistical evaluation of the models to refine quantitative predictions and a general dialogical interaction between theory and empirics.
- The Reserve Bank of Australia and Commonwealth Treasury's economic management of the Australian responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-08.
- The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's work relating to local media content distribution by global technology companies.
- The Productivity Commission's ongoing work driving productivity-enhancing reforms in Australia.
- The Centre for Social Research in Health's translation of theories and evidence into health promotion practice, notably with respect to the prevention, treatment and lived experiences of HIV and viral hepatitis.
- The design of a basic income model that can be operationalised and implemented in Australia (i.e., is in line with current policy settings). The Federal opposition is currently considering adopting this model as policy.[1]
- The policy and societal impact of the ongoing Nation Building work being undertaken by social scientists.[2,3]
- The contributions by social scientists to our understandings of the ways that big tech, social media and the spread of misinformation/'fake news' are changing social, economic and governance systems across the globe.

4. How optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about the future for the social sciences? What are the key factors informing your view?

Overall sentiment among DASSH members is mixed. There is agreement that the social sciences have an important role to play in addressing some of the most significant challenges facing the world this century (as noted above), and there have been recent examples of responses to social and economic crises being driven by social science (e.g., even ideologically conservative governments have responded to the current pandemic with social insurance programs and Keynesian stimulus initiatives informed by academic findings). Conversely, though, in some areas there appears to be a substantial disconnect between policy makers and social scientists, and it has become increasingly difficult to be 'heard' over recent decades, particularly for those working outside of economics. Economics plays important roles in public policy, but the dominance of any single discipline in the evidence base can have a distortionary effect on how policy is designed and evaluated. Social scientists have been expending considerable effort to build new platforms for engagement on this front, but the task is made more difficult by commentary and processes which seek to delegitimise experts.

Much of the pessimism felt by our members relates to the university sector as a whole rather than to the social sciences specifically. It remains to be seen what the ultimate impact of the Tehan higher education reforms will be, but the rhetoric emphasising STEM studies at the (figurative and literal) expense of HASS studies is detrimental to the reputations of our disciplines. Wider financial problems in the university sector make it difficult to combat this messaging, in addition to limiting the amount of teaching and research that can be undertaken. These factors all contribute to widespread morale problems, which compound existing issues further.

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[1] Spies-Butcher, B., Phillips, B., Henderson, T. (2020). Between universalism and targeting: Exploring policy pathways for an Australian Basic Income. *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 31(4), 502-523. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1035304620964272
[2] Hemming, S., Rigney, D., Bignall, S., Berg, S., & Rigney, G. (2019). Indigenous nation building for environmental futures: Murrundi flows through Ngarrindjeri country. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, 26(3), 216-235.
[3] Hemming, S., Rigney, D., Muller, S. L., Rigney, G., & Campbell, I. (2017). A new direction for water management? Indigenous nation building as a strategy for river health. *Ecology and Society*, 22(2).

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5. What do you see as the three biggest challenges and opportunities for the social sciences in the next five to ten years? How can we address the challenges and harness the opportunities?

Challenges:

- Funding of Universities, including government contributions and international student fees
- Anti-intellectualism, particularly aimed at non-STEM experts
- Workforce issues, including ageing workforce, ECR pathways and perceived career prospects for graduates

Opportunities:

- Career opportunities for social sciences graduates are very good and in roles unlikely to face automation
- Technological advances have made it possible for world-leading social sciences research to be conducted with basic equipment and open-source software
- Solutions to major challenges currently facing humanity all require a social sciences lens

DASSH members have highlighted the increasingly urgent need to improve public understanding of the social sciences particularly in relation to the employability and impact of social sciences graduates. Those working in the disciplines know that our graduates are making significant contributions to social and economic prosperity, but we do not sufficiently convey this to our stakeholders, including our institutions, funding bodies, prospective students and their parents, and employers. We have an opportunity now to make a concerted effort to improve the ways that we map and promote our disciplines. This can be done with reference to the career pathways of the Academy Fellows, but we must also champion the successes of those outside of the Academy and academia. We have an obligation to showcase the ways in which we partner with and add value to STEM and the health domains, and we must also advance the ways in which our disciplines shape more equitable and inclusive futures, benefitting society in their own rights.

6. What are the three biggest challenges Australian society will face in the next five to ten years? What role will social science knowledge and expertise play in resolving these challenges?

- Climate change.

The Earth's climate and ecosystems have already experienced wide-scale change and degradation resulting from human activities since the industrial revolution. Once-fertile regions across the world are becoming or at risk of becoming uninhabitable for humans, and many of the ecosystems which we rely on for food production, value for their biodiversity, and have incorporated into our cultural activities are on the verge of collapse. There is no escaping the need to address the underlying causes of climate change and ecosystem destruction (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, the expanding human population and its demand for space and resources), and in doing so, we can expect our societies to change drastically.

In the Australian context, our economy will undergo a period of rapid change in the next five to ten years as all industries and sectors adapt towards net-zero emissions targets, resulting in social, cultural, structural, and economic shifts. Without careful attention, planning and monitoring by social scientists with appropriate expertise, these shifts will almost certainly exacerbate existing inequalities, including for Indigenous peoples, those with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and other groups vulnerable to economic and structural risk.

Though these economic and social changes pose enormous challenges, they also offer opportunities to reimagine our existing systems and norms to create a more equitable society. Social sciences knowledge and expertise is crucial in providing the evidence to facilitate this reimagining and to designing and implementing the policies and systems which will enable the transitions. Beyond the near term, social scientists will play a role in reviewing the changes that are made and the impacts they have on our societies. There will also be, as there has always been, substantial value in the work social scientists will do in recording human experiences across changing contexts and circumstances.

- Growing inequality and accompanying threats to security, including rise of populism and anti-democratic movements

Social scientists are leading efforts to define the policy settings that will help to alleviate widening inequalities in Australia and internationally, contributing to the possibility of fairer societies.

The evolution of the public sphere in recent years, which is now saturated with (often highly polarised, factionalised and questionable) information, is a huge challenge to traditional understandings of democratic processes and how the public engages with expertise, institutions and politics. Social science knowledge produces sound methods, skills, and concepts to facilitate a more critical understanding of, and policy responses to, these challenges for the democratic accountability of our societies and institutions. To achieve any effective response, however, social scientists will need to find ways to influence with those who currently dismiss academics and researchers off-hand when their findings do not support their existing worldviews.

Related to the rise of misinformation is the mismatch between the working population's skills and the needs of society in the future. Attempts by governments to 'nudge' students into different courses and career paths have the potential to lead to too many science and commerce graduates, while a more general 'arts' approach is arguably a better pathway to prepare a significant portion of the future workforce for the expected structural changes in the economy.

- Public health, including current and future pandemics and population ageing

Social scientists have played critical roles during the COVID-19 pandemic, most prominently in their contributions to economic and public health policy design and implementation. Ongoing global trends, including climate change, globalisation, intensive farming practices and the encroachment of human settlements on wildlife habitats, combine to make pandemics increasingly likely events, and so it is safe to assume social scientists will be called upon to assist with similar crises in future.

Beyond the current pandemic, Australian society is facing a demographic transition in which the proportion of the population in the oldest age groups continues to rise, while groups typically considered to be 'working age' decline. This change poses challenges to Australia's welfare state and will necessitate creative responses that place compassion and concern for human welfare at their centre. Social sciences knowledge and expertise will be crucial in designing, implementing and evaluating social policy responses to demographic transition.

7. Is this definition of the social sciences reasonable? How might it be improved?

Members were generally supportive of the definition, though some took issue with its apparent assumption that psychology and statistics are not typically categorised as part of social sciences but rather part of STEM and health, respectively. At many universities worldwide, psychology is considered part of social sciences (e.g., Harvard), while the discipline of statistics is historically inextricably linked to the social sciences. Others believed that the definition could be improved by specifically noting the capacity of the social sciences in the 'interpretation' of data and meaning.

8. Is this a comprehensive picture of the social science workforce in Australia? Are there any sources we should consult for more comprehensive data?

It is likely that many social sciences graduates are in positions that are not classified as 'teachers' or 'researchers' but nonetheless draw on their social science training daily in their working lives e.g., those trained in criminology working in courts, corrections and allied professions. Projects that could map the presence of social science graduates across different professions and across specific workplaces would be of great value to university HASS faculties and HASS peak bodies.

9. Is "40:40:20" a viable academic workload model for Australian social sciences in the future? What changes in the structure of academic employment would help to optimise social science research and teaching in universities?

The application of the 40:40:20 model, and the volume of work attached in particular to the teaching component, varies markedly across the sector, making useful generalisations very difficult. The model is no more of a problem for the social sciences than it is for other disciplines in HASS, or academia more generally. The capacity to vary both research and teaching components would, however, offer opportunities to strengthen research and teaching in the social sciences. In terms of optimising the social sciences, the issue is not so much the workload model as it is the workload in general, the quality of research training and support (in comparison to international competitors), and the availability of research funds.

10. What are the critical challenges in the social sciences' academic workforce?

DASSH members identified a wide range of critical challenges facing the social sciences' academic workforce, including:

Early Career Researcher (ECR) opportunities and pathways:
- Insufficiently clear pathways for social sciences PhD graduates, particularly non-academic pathways
- Precarious nature of academic employment opportunities for ECRs

Workforce issues among continuing staff:
- Lack of diversity, particularly at higher levels
- Ageing workforce, need for succession planning
- Australian academia has a very immobile labour market (Australian academics rarely move between institutions) making it difficult to adapt to change according to needs

Regional issues
- Conflicting demands on academics from government/funding bodies to conduct research activities relating to Australian/regional topics on the one hand, while working in a in system which incentivises global (especially North American or European) activity on the other
- Variation and lack of standards in research training provision
- Relatively little collaboration between institutions
- Career development overly focussed on the individual, rather than supporting major centres and groupings

11. What are the key challenges faced by early and mid-career social sciences academics in their career progression? Are they different compared to other disciplines? What strategies might support them?

There are very few 'entry level' academic positions for PhD graduates in the social sciences that allow development of both teaching and research skills, or which provide secure, long-term employment. As a result, the few ongoing positions that are advertised attract applicants who already have a substantial post-doctoral experience. Doctoral graduates who aim to work in the university sector can expect to face several years of insecure and casualised teaching and research work before they may be considered competitive for ongoing positions. While this pattern is not exclusive to social science disciplines, it is particularly acute in many of them as the work of social scientists does not usually require the large teams that are common in some STEM disciplines. The absence of large teams (and the funding that they attract) limits the opportunities for established researchers to recruit, train and mentor emerging academics. The fact that it is possible for many social sciences projects to be completed without large teams, combined with the relative scarcity of research funding and the need to minimise project budgets in competitive schemes, makes this a particularly difficult problem to solve.

The challenges for mid-career academics are different. Academics who are successful in finding entry-level positions have access to support schemes that are specific to Early Career Researchers (ECRs). These typically include university-funded grants and mentorship arrangements. In contrast to ECRs, mid-career academics ordinarily lack formal or targeted professional development opportunities. They are required to apply for competitive research funding without having had the time or support to develop track records that approach those of the senior academics with whom they are competing. Along with greater internal support from universities, the European Research Council's Consolidator Grant program could be used as a model by the Australian Research Council to offer targeted support to mid-career researchers in the future.

12. What are the barriers or enablers to increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other minority groups in the academic workforce? Are they different compared to other disciplines? What strategies might support them?

Barriers:
- Poor recognition of the value Indigenous academics in 'mainstream' disciplines and roles.
  - Indigenous scholars are too often seen as only being necessary for Indigenous-related work and as having little to contribute beyond those areas. This is despite Indigenous scholars having identical disciplinary training to that of their non-Indigenous colleagues, combined with Indigenous perspectives and expertise that are comparatively rare both in society and academia. Indigenous scholars should therefore, if anything, be considered as bringing added value to whichever disciplines they specialise in.

- Administrative burdens
  - Being a minority in a university or academic unit often leads to overly high administrative burdens and pressure to represent one's entire community. While the efforts of universities to include more Indigenous voices are necessary and generally well-intentioned steps towards enabling increased participation by Indigenous peoples in higher education, it is often the case that a unit's lone Indigenous employee will be called upon to represent the Indigenous community as a whole in every committee, panel, event etc. This takes these academics away from their teaching and research, making it more difficult for them to be visible in these spaces. It is vital that Indigenous academics are present and available in academic work (whatever discipline), and have the time to engage with students, communities and collaborators, if we are to see any long-term, sustainable changes in the academic workforce.
- Isolation and marginalisation
  - Being the only Indigenous academic in a discipline area can be isolating and, in some cases, traumatising.[4,5,6] The issue of isolation can only be properly combatted by addressing pipeline issues in schools, undergraduate and higher degree research programs in the long term.

Enablers:
- The increasing emphasis on Indigenous leadership in universities is promising.[7]
- Indigenous academics in the wider university workforce, acting as role models and mentors to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and researchers.
- Movements within major funding bodies to better recognise and record Indigenous research contributions. The new 'Indigenous' Field of Research codes in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) are yet to be properly evaluated but appear well-intentioned.

Strategies:
- Networks to support/encourage Indigenous knowledge sharing and combat feelings of isolation (e.g., Network of Associate and Deputy Deans Indigenous Special Interest Group). Many networks exist informally, and many universities have business units that act as Indigenous knowledge bases (e.g., advising faculty and students, developing guidelines, Reconciliation Action Plans etc.), but perhaps there is a place for a national network or knowledge base. The problem with this approach is that it would likely require more non-academic work by Indigenous academics to set up and run. It may perhaps be an initiative that could be constructed in partnership with a non-university organisation.
- Resources to support workload management and burnout avoidance for Indigenous employees.
- Greater education of academic staff and students (in all disciplines) about the barriers to Indigenous participation and the experiences of Indigenous peoples when they do participate in academia.

13. What impact has COVID-19 had on the social sciences' academic workforce and institutions?

We cannot underestimate the social impacts of the pandemic on ourselves and our colleagues, particularly on those who experienced extended periods of lockdown or quarantine or who have been separated from loved ones. The loss of social interaction, both professional and personal, has in itself been a major impediment to productivity for many, as has the emotional labour required to address the dramatically increased pastoral care responsibilities of teaching staff in particular. All of these issues are often especially challenging for those with caring responsibilities.

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[4] Fredericks, B.L. (2009) The epistemology that maintains white race privilege, power and control of Indigenous Studies and Indigenous peoples' participation in universities. *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association eJournal*, 5(1). pp. 1-12.

[5] Thunig, A., Jones, T. (2020). 'Don't make me play house-n***er': Indigenous academic women treated as 'black performer' within higher education. *Australian Education Research*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-020-00405-9

[6] Asmar, C., Page, S. (2017). Pigeonholed, peripheral or pioneering? Findings from a national study of Indigenous Australian academics in the disciplines, *Studies in Higher Education*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1281240

[7] See for example, Coates, S. K., Trudgett, M., & Page, S. (2020). Indigenous higher education sector: The evolution of recognised Indigenous Leaders within Australian Universities. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 1-7.

There has been a shift to a far greater focus on teaching and the revenue raised through teaching. Staff have been required to undertake significant and rapid digital uplift in the service of delivering teaching online which has inevitably encroached on research activities. Hiring freezes and staffing reductions have disproportionately affected the career mobility and progression of many early career researchers, and we may find that many of them will not return or be retained in academia.

None of this is unique to the social sciences.

There may be some important long-term benefits resulting from this period in institutional operational settings post-COVID. In addition, some social sciences researchers have taken on prominent roles in efforts to combat the pandemic and associated issues, and there have been some major funding opportunities.

14. Are you concerned about the impact of the Job-Ready Graduates legislation on the social sciences? What do you anticipate the impacts (positive or negative) will be?

Our members are concerned the Tehan reforms will provide a disincentive for students to enter social sciences degrees, notably the Bachelor of Arts. Even among the disciplines which have not seen their fees increase, the rhetoric surrounding the legislation was often simplified into presenting Arts (HASS) degrees in opposition to Science (STEM) degrees. It is difficult to see how this public denigration of HASS disciplines and the prospects of HASS graduates would not concern prospective students and their parents. In the long term, having fewer social sciences graduates in our workforce would limit Australia's ability to respond to current and future social and economic challenges.

DASSH members are also concerned that the students who continue to enrol in social science degrees will incur HECS-HELP debts that will take them many years to repay. By reducing after-tax income, the deduction of HECS-HELP repayments will reduce the amount of superannuation that social science graduates are able to save during this time (in the form of voluntary contributions), effecting a 'double burden' that will be particularly damaging for women and those from already disadvantaged backgrounds. There is also the possibility that low-SES or otherwise disadvantaged prospective students will choose not to enrol in social sciences degrees, leading to the disciplines becoming the domains of only the 'elite'. This reduction in the diversity of social scientists would degrade both the quality of our work and the reputations of our disciplines. Whether or not the Tehan reforms act as a disincentive for students to enrol in social science programs, it will certainly act as an unnecessary and nonsensical long-term penalty for those who undertake these degrees.

Any impacts on enrolments that may occur will be unevenly distributed across the sector, with the Group of Eight likely faring better than smaller and more regional institutions. One positive outcome could be that institutions with concentrations of social science programmes may be incentivised to collaborate more effectively. It may also prompt social science disciplines to improve the way that they articulate their value propositions for students and their parents, and to focus more intently on delivering their specified graduate outcomes.

15. What challenges do social sciences graduates face in transitioning to employment? Are they different compared to other disciplines? What strategies might support them?

Graduates can lack a clear understanding of the skills they have developed, the uniqueness and value of those skills, and how to demonstrate their value to employers. Somewhat perversely, there can be too many options available to social sciences graduates; their skills are valuable in many industries, so students can struggle to narrow down their searches or identify suitable and desirable roles, particularly entry-level roles with pathways to careers. This would seem to be an issue for most graduates of generalist degrees (including STEM majors). Graduates with medicine or health sciences degrees tend to have a far narrower set of career pathways than those with degrees majoring in a social science or STEM discipline.

It is important not to generalise across the social sciences. There is no evidence to suggest there are serious problems in any specific discipline, but each of the disciplines could do a much better job (institutionally and nationally) at tracking and profiling graduates with a view to demonstrating the diverse career pathways open to social sciences graduates.

Faculties across our network have been developing and implementing Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) models to support students in the transition from university to the workforce. Further information about WIL in

Bachelor of Arts programs can be found in a report by Deanne Gannaway and Karen Sheppard, supported and published by DASSH.[8] It should be noted that in the time since this report was published in 2016, emphasis on WIL has further increased in HASS faculties in response to positive outcomes of WIL programs, and the government's National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund is likely to further encourage our members to embed WIL in their degrees.[9]

16. What are the barriers to securing research funding in the social sciences?

The primary barrier to all research funding in Australia, including in the social sciences, is competition; there is insufficient funding in relation to the number of worthy projects and researchers. Furthermore, our members note that lower than average success rates in some social sciences disciplines may indicate overly self-critical tendencies and methodological divides among peer-reviewers in these disciplines.

Among the agencies which fund the social sciences, there does not appear to be any strong bias for or against the social sciences, but the National Science and Research Priorities list is clearly targeted primarily at selected STEM disciplines.

17. Is the current research infrastructure fit for purpose? If no, what do you feel would serve you the best?

The current social sciences research infrastructure in Australia is not fit for purpose, however, the new HASS and Indigenous Research Data Commons (RDC) promises to make major improvements if it can be designed and implemented effectively and in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

18. What are the barriers to increased participation in social sciences at school? What could help improve the situation?

STEM subjects are weighted more highly towards ATAR scores and are prerequisites for many university courses, creating a strong incentive for senior secondary school students to follow STEM pathways.

Students are encouraged to choose STEM subjects in order to 'keep their options open' if they are undecided about whether to pursue HASS- or STEM-focussed degrees at the tertiary level (e.g., Arts degrees do not require any prerequisites other than English, which is compulsory anyway, while most STEM degrees also require a mathematics subject and/or Biology, Chemistry and/or Physics).

With only a limited number of subjects in the final years, it is understandable and natural that high-achieving students would opt for subjects that will allow them to achieve higher ATARs and apply for a wider range of university programs.

19. Where do you see the biggest challenges and opportunities for social science education over the coming years?

The primary challenge in social sciences teaching in the coming years will be combatting misleading rhetoric about the value of HASS disciplines and Arts degrees to individuals, the economy and society. Somewhat ironically, the biggest opportunity for social sciences education is growing demand for social sciences skills by employers and society. The task for social sciences educators may be to work more collaboratively with other disciplines to meet demand for social sciences skills by employers in sectors which do not traditionally recruit from social sciences graduates. The efforts by our members to embed Work Integrated Learning in their degrees has the potential to grow and improve relationships with employers from diverse industries (see response to Question 15).

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[8] Gannaway, D. & Sheppard, K. (2016). WIL-ing the BA: Work experience opportunities in the Australian Bachelor of Arts. Brisbane: University of Queensland. Viewed on 16 March 2021. Available at: https://dassh.edu.au/research/ba-benchmarking-project/work-integrated-learning/
[9] Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2020). National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund Consultation Paper. Viewed on 16 March 2021. Available at https://www.dese.gov.au/job-ready/resources/npilf-consultation-paper

20. Why do you think the number of social science doctoral students has remained near static over the last decade, while significantly increasing in STEM and health sciences?

Social sciences research is often conducted by a lone researcher or a small team, leaving relatively few opportunities for junior researchers to collaborate with established staff. Although this model is changing, it is in contrast to much the work conducted in STEM disciplines, which more often requires larger teams that can employ undergraduate, masters and doctoral students as well as postdoctoral researchers, ECRs and MCRs. The lack of a pipeline in social sciences and HASS disciplines more generally makes it comparatively difficult for prospective students to imagine a viable career pathway. Applied social science doctorates would be a useful project to pursue in the sector more widely.

There are also fewer non-academic postdoctoral employment opportunities for those with social sciences doctorates that cannot be pursued by candidates with other qualifications. Also, many universities have increased support for STEM related HDRs and reduced the allocation of scholarships and funding to HASS disciplines.

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 Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) in Australian and New Zealand universities. DASSH supports those within these institutions who have responsibility for the governance and management of research, teaching and engagement in HASS disciplines. DASSH also supports those who aspire to these positions through a Network of Associate and Deputy Deans.