

Feedback on Interim Report of the Australian Universities Accord Panel

Alfred Deakin Professor Liz Johnson PFHEA, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic, Deakin University
Professor Sally Kift PFHEA FAAL, Vice Chancellor's Fellow, Victoria University, Adjunct Professor: JCU, QUT, La Trobe University
Associate Professor Jason Lodge, Deputy Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Associate Professor, School of Education, The University of Queensland

National collaboration on learning and teaching

Our feedback builds on our [submission](#) in response to the Discussion Paper of the Australian Universities Accord Panel.

The Interim Report of the Accord Panel lays out the compelling arguments for investment in a better connected Australian tertiary education system. It demonstrates the need for more skilled graduates, for a knowledge economy and for an equitable society where all can and do succeed. The Interim Report calls for major uplift in participation of under-represented groups, far greater collaboration with industry in education, and alignment and collaboration across all groups within tertiary education. However, all action to improve tertiary education outcomes rests on quality enhancement. We cannot just do more, we must do better.

We **strongly support** the Interim Report's focus on creating *the foundations for a high functioning national system that pursue(s) systemic excellence in learning and teaching.* (p.14, p.75)

The path to systemic quality enhancement needs three aligned components: **purpose** created through agreed mission, incentives and regulation; a supportive financial and structural **environment**; and, critically, mechanisms to innovate and improve **practice**. International and prior national examples demonstrate the great value of structured collaboration across education providers and groups that grows and shares expertise to achieve real, whole-of-sector uplift in learning and teaching and student experience.

We **strongly support** the establishment of a *National Learning and Teaching Committee* (or equivalent), noting a national program for quality enhancement is a **core enabler** across almost every area proposed for consideration in the Interim Report. (p.78)

We **strongly support** *enhancing the professional development of academic staff in teaching* and a national program that *encourages improvements in quality learning and teaching, responds to new curriculum approaches ... and provides for appropriate teaching infrastructure.* (p.78)

Whole-of-sector uplift requires co-ordinated effort. It draws on specialist expertise, is informed by scholarship, standards and regulations, builds capability and works directly with practitioners. Identifying, harnessing and scaling the work of excellent practitioners is currently a lost opportunity with no national collaboration or dissemination point for innovation and achievement. Quality enhancement needs the confidence of providers and their collaborative investment. Quality assurance has a different but aligned role in creating the guardrails for action. This proposal directly responds to the Panel's question (p.86): 'what would encourage the sector to move beyond the minimal standards approach and to pursue systemic excellence in learning and teaching?'

We **support** the placement of the *National Learning and Teaching Committee* within the proposed *Tertiary Education Commission*, or within other bodies that ensure cross-sector reach and independence. (p78)

We **suggest** the Australian Awards for University Teaching are managed and delivered by the *National Learning and Teaching Committee* to explicitly link leading practice to uplift.

Challenges facing the tertiary sector are urgent. Providers are facing an unprecedented rate of change, demanding rapid redesign and upskilling. National collaboration is an efficient and effective approach to convert challenges to improvements. Pressing challenges that need **national action now** for practitioners and learners include:

- revolution in digital technologies, including generative AI and effective modes of lifelong learning that reflect and enable contemporary life and work;
- learning design for diverse cohorts that can adapt to delivery at scale and grow student success;
- meaningful assessment for future learning and work that draws on decades of research evidence;
- urgent demand for contemporary skills and understanding including Indigenous Knowledges and cultures.

The *National Learning and Teaching Committee* (or equivalent) should be **an early step in sector reform**. It will only be effective if enabled via trusted partnerships and must build engagement and demonstrate value. Collaborative construction of a national quality enhancement mechanism is a cost-effective way to build engagement and deliver quick wins on the ground for the Accord's 'world-leading learning experiences.' (p 86)

We **propose** an **early sector-wide development project** to engage providers, design the new *National Learning and Teaching Committee* (or equivalent) and determine urgent sector priorities and quick wins for quality enhancement in learning and teaching and student experience. This project will set the tone for future collaboration, including across sectors, and build relationships between provider groups.

This work should begin as soon as possible to create mechanisms for roll-out of Accord recommendations.

Our proposal has wide sectoral support with endorsers ready to engage. A development project, funded to \$200-300K, would build collaborative networks across provider groups, work with existing specialist centres and outline approaches for urgent action. This work could be directly commissioned by Government and, ahead of the formation of a putative *Tertiary Education Commission*, could be guided by a sectoral governing body such as the Higher Education Standards Panel.

Endorsements

As noted in our original submission, the concept of a national centre to co-ordinate and drive quality enhancement has widespread support across higher education. Deputy Vice-Chancellors Academic/Education across Australian universities expressed support for a national centre of learning and teaching in their submission to the Accord Panel's consultation and have endorsed this feedback.

This feedback was circulated to sector peak bodies and leaders who endorsed the original proposal. 41 peak bodies and leaders endorse this feedback and have committed to participate in collaboration to design an effective national mechanism in higher education. Development of this proposal will require deep and comprehensive consultation.

Students
Student Voice Australasia
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium
University and TAFE Associations
Australian Technology Network
Innovative Research Universities
TAFE Directors Australia
Universities Australia Deputy Vice-Chancellors Academic
Deans' councils
Australian Business Deans Council
Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities
Australian Council of Deans of Education
Australian Council of Deans of ICT
Australian Council of Deans of Science
Australian Council of Engineering Deans
Council of Australian Law Deans
Heads of Departments and Schools of Psychology Australia
Education professional associations
Association for Academic Language and Learning
Australian Chairs of Academic Boards and Senates
Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning
Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education
Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows' Network
Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training
Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association
Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators
Council of Australasian University Leaders in Learning and Teaching
Council of Australian University Librarians
Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia
Heads of Student Administration ANZ

Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia
National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia
National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services
Educational research and resource centres
Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning, Deakin University
Curtin Academy, Curtin University
Scientia Education Academy UNSW
Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation, UQ
Sector leaders (including Chairs of Higher Education bodies)
The Honourable Professor Verity Firth, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Social Justice & Inclusion), UTS
Professor Andrew Harvey, Professor of Education, Griffith University
Professor Kerri-Lee Krause, Interim Vice-Chancellor, Avondale University
Professor Karen Nelson, Provost, USQ
Professor Nalini Pather, Mayne Professor of Medical Education, UQ
Professor David Sadler, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), UWA
Others
AiGroup's Centre for Education and Training
Queensland Consortium for Microcredentials Working Group
Victoria Micro-Credentials Community of Practice and Working Group