

Curtin University: Curtin Academy Fellows

The Curtin Academy is a fellowship of elite teachers selected for their leadership of teaching excellence and innovation. <https://www.curtinacademy.com/about>

What kind of higher education (HE) system does Australia need in two- and three-decades' time?

A system that:

- Enables participants to develop their skills and contribute as much as possible to enabling others through teaching and research.
- Is global in its approach, not just geographically but socially. Universities should be a rich source of wisdom for our local community, for Australia and for the planet.
- Is independent of the whims of the current political party of the day. Universities are big ships that take a long time to change tack. They need certainty and stability to develop and execute strategy. Abrupt policy changes without consideration and adequate input from the sector suck up resources and ultimately erode universities' ability to fulfil their missions, given so much time, money and energy are required to implement the changes.
- Has with close links to industry, so that it can respond to the knowledge and skills needed in workforces.
- Prepares graduates for the workforce, while maintaining sufficient arts degrees to retain a sense of "culture" in our society.

What actions and solutions are needed now, to address the major changes underway in our society, economy, and environment?

Better articulation with non-award courses and TAFE.

Attract mature aged students e.g., university open days promoted to parents and their high school children.

Recognition that HE delivery is a skill; academic staff should be appropriately qualified to teach in HE setting.

Greater employment of staff on continuing and fixed term contracts i.e., less dependence on sessional teaching staff.

A true nexus between research and teaching, so that there is translation of evidence into teaching, not just into practice.

A new way of thinking about work-integrated learning that does not use students to address workforce shortages, or leave students with significant debt.

There needs to be a return to adequate funding of larger-scale research projects that investigate longer-term effects of HE on graduates, attrition, areas of low participation, and so on. HE is a big player in Australian productivity, and more R&D is needed to ensure we are ahead of trends and are facing challenges from an evidence-based perspective.

Funding of research needs to be broader in focus. Funding bodies need to trust researchers to ask questions that are important, even if they may not appear to have direct applicability to productivity. It is important to understand how we, as a society, function during and after change in order to better prepare and manage challenges.

Increase in rural campuses to provide HE access for regional communities to stay and work in their local area.

How can we ensure all Australians have the opportunity to participate in higher education?

Equity in HE is a key issue for us to deal with but we need more data on the perceptions of those who think HE is not for them, and why. Alternative pathway entry has been expanded recently - is this making a difference?

The FEE-HELP system needs to be reconsidered, as the current tax arrangements are a disincentive for some, especially marginalised groups.

We must capitalise on what we have done to improve access during Covid times, and ensure online learning is well integrated with on-campus activities.

Increase support for diverse learners and mental health within HE. Current funding does not account for students that may require additional support. Funding models could allocate additional funds to ensure students with support needs have funding to assist universities to adequately provide those services.

Student fees (HECS and HELP) need to be uniform across all courses – The Job-Ready scheme disadvantages low SES students.

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