Responses to selected questions presented in the Discussion Paper

Q1 How should an Accord be structured and focused to meet the challenges facing Australia’s higher education system? What is needed to overcome limitations in the current approach to Australian higher education?

Considering the covered time period up to 30 years time, it will be important to address potential of the new technologies in research, delivery of education, and the entire structure of the higher education sector. The impact of technological innovation tend to be overestimated in the short term and under estimated in the longer term. It would be tempting to see e.g. 3 scenarios of the future development paths as part of the accord reporting.

Q4 Looking from now to 2030 and 2040, what major national challenges and opportunities should Australian higher education be focused on meeting?

Successful green transition, digital transition, and geopolitical challenges.

Q5 How do the current structures of institutions, regulation and funding in higher education help or hinder Australia’s ability to meet these challenges? What needs to change? Q6 What are the best ways to achieve and sustain future growth in Australian higher education, given the changing needs of the population and the current pressures on public funding? Q7 How should the mix of providers evolve, considering the size and location of existing institutions and the future needs of communities? Q25 How should Australia leverage its research capacity overall and use it more effectively to develop new capabilities and solve wicked problems?

Predictable and sufficient funding is essential for strong development of basic research. It will be particularly important to provide strong infra and continuous funding for curiosity driven research in natural sciences. See e.g. Helmholz Foundation in Germany. Private foundations could be an interesting option for institutional development. They have been used extremely successfully e.g. in Denmark to support knowledge driven economy. Private foundations provide yearly about 1.3 Billion EUR funding for higher education. In many aspects they complement public sector funding. They also create anchors that can keep the ownership of strategic businesses in national ownership. Q9 How should Australia ensure enough students are studying courses that align with the changing needs of the economy and society? Continuous tracking of national and international trends as an element that effectively feeds into the Department of Education and other stake holders planning. Apart from unknown unknowns, we are not lacking information on future needs. We need effective ways to utilise and use available information effectively.

Q11 How should Australia boost demand from people to study in the higher education system?

Demand for higher education, it all starts from homes and primary education. The value of knowledge and cultivated mind needs to be widely appreciated. This will create the basic social processes that create demand for higher education.

Q17 How should better alignment and connection across Australia’s tertiary education system be achieved? Q20 How can pathways between VET and higher education be improved, and how can students be helped to navigate these pathways?

One practical example. Directing extra government resources for the organisations where students can easily take courses from other institutions curricula. Cross utilisation of courses can be rewarded e.g. based on accumulation of study credits received from other institutions curricula.

Q23 How should an Accord help Australia increase collaboration between industry, government and universities to solve big challenges? Q26 How can Australia stimulate greater industry investment in research and more effective collaboration?

Encourage universities to set up multi-disciplinary platforms that address global challenges e.g. green transition, digital transition, geopolitical development

Q24 What reforms will enable Australian research institutions to achieve excellence, scale and impact in particular fields?

Reform of the research assessment system is essential as well as reform of the way we deliver education.

Q28 What is needed to increase the number of people from under-represented groups applying to and prepared for higher education, both from school and from other pathways? Q29 What changes in provider practices and offerings are necessary to ensure all potential students can succeed in their chosen area of study? Q30 How can governments, institutions and employers assist students, widen opportunities and remove barriers to higher education? Q32 How can best practice learning and teaching for students from under-represented groups be embedded across the higher education system, including the use of remote learning?

Inclusion related research (the nature of concept itself) and inclusion research outcomes can provide the and situational awareness and needed actions for improving the position of under-represented groups.

 Q35 Where providers make a distinctive contribution to national objectives through community, location-based or specialised economic development, how should this contribution be identified and invested in?

Public funding of joint RDI projects involving Universitites, Businesses, Users and other stake holders has been proved effective in several contexts.

Q36 What regulatory and governance reforms would enable the higher education sector to better meet contemporary demands?

Reform of the degree based system where possible. More effective use of micro credits etc. It needs to be defined how the costs life long learning will be covered. Split between beneficiaries (individual, business, state) might be a solution.

Q41 How should research quality be prioritised and supported most effectively over the next decade?

By investing on basic research and infra that supports it. This will provide the basis for more applied research and development.

Q42 What settings are needed to ensure academic integrity, and how can new technologies and innovative assessment practices be leveraged to improve academic integrity?

By sticking to very basic principles of academic endeavor and still utilising new technologies. Constant training will be needed for researchers, educators and students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. I have placed my reponses below the relevant questions I wish some of the thoughts will be useful

Jari Kuusisto