

## CONSULTANCY BRIEF

### The Australian Higher Education Workforce of the Future

**Introduction:** *The consultancy brief has been developed with the assistance of McCrindle Research, an independent research company, and involved analysis of sector reports, client documents and 5 in-depth interviews with experts from across the Higher Education (HE) sector. The brief contains the background, research purpose, statement of requirements, and information pertaining to this research project.*

**Background:** AHEIA (Australian Higher Education Industrial Association), in partnership with the Deputy Vice-Chancellors Corporate Group of UA (Universities Australia), is seeking to commission research into what the HE workforce of the future needs to look like if Australian universities are going to be well-positioned to meet the emerging demands that will be placed upon them.

AHEIA and UA's representation of 39 universities across Australia is detailed in Andrew Norton's *Mapping Australian Higher Education 2014-15*. This annual report on HE detailed a workforce of 118,000 staff, 52,600 Academics, 65,500 Professionals and 67,000 casuals, with sector-wide revenue of \$26.5B and sector-wide wages of \$18B (approximate figures).

Over the last two decades significant changes have occurred within the HE workforce and have involved major federal government policy changes. The recent (2012) introduction of the Demand Driven Model has significantly impacted the sector with considerable growth in student enrolments, and profound changes to the way universities currently operate will occur if the higher education system is deregulated in the manner proposed by the federal government. The uncertainty of what the future holds for Australian universities is compounded by shifts in economic factors in Australia, rapid technological changes, and global factors such as international student participation in the Australian HE system and international economic trends. The expectations of students are also becoming more sophisticated, and the needs of industry are continuing to change.

As a consequence, there is a requirement for universities to reshape their course offerings, and the way in which teaching and support services are delivered to their students. This also involves a need to continually reassess and change the manner in which internal business processes need to be structured to support service delivery to students. At the same time, university workforces are continuing to grow in size and complexity, and effective people management and workforce planning are becoming vitally important to the proper functioning of universities.

**Research Objectives:** The purpose of the research is to examine the **impact** of environmental and other factors on what will be required of the future HE workforce, including by having regard to mega trends affecting the HE future workforce and the Australian workforce of the future more generally.

This research will involve consultation with key stakeholders including Vice-Chancellors and other senior executives, university line managers and HR Directors, leading academics with relevant research interests, Industry, Government and representative bodies, including student bodies.

The research output will raise awareness, create urgency and guide action. This will be accomplished through strategic quantitative and qualitative research into five key areas for scoping and analysis as outlined below.

The research will not entail an in-depth analysis of the content of university enterprise agreements or the way in which the HE workforce is currently regulated by industrial instruments. The research output will, however, seek to inform further discussions within the sector about how university industrial arrangements will need to be structured to appropriately accommodate the future workforce needs of Australian universities.

**Scope of Services:** The 5 key areas for scoping in this research project are: the environmental impact factors influencing the HE workforce, the changing nature of work, changing business needs, rising student expectations, and future workforce needs and their implications.

### 1. **Environmental Impact Factors**

Universities play a fundamental societal role in advancing knowledge and equipping the next generations to fulfil essential workplace needs. The impact and pace of technological change drives what is taught by universities, how it is taught, by whom it is taught and from where it is taught. “Chalk and talk” in-person delivery is no longer a cornerstone of university teaching. The composition of the student population is very different to what it was 20 years ago, and could be very different again in 20 years’ time. Government policy and funding arrangements will play an important role in determining the size and nature of the university student cohort of the future. Universities are increasingly expected to “do more with less”, maintain high academic standards, strengthen their engagement with industry, foster research and other collaboration across national boundaries, and serve local community interests and well as the national interest.

Additionally the technological trends, the ubiquitous availability of knowledge and the use of big data and digital infrastructure need to be examined to understand changing learning and teaching and student engagement trends. There is also a need to consider the future funding sources for the HE sector, including the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) and alternative

funding sources. There are also rising expectations around the strategic importance of global research standing and demonstrated research impact. The level of global competition has intensified around funding, staff and students.

## **2. The Changing Nature of Work**

There is a need to look beyond the HE sector, as well as within the HE sector itself, to examine the way in which the nature of work is changing, how the organisation of work is changing and the engagement/collaboration required to undertake that work. Individual worker mobility between different job-roles, and indeed different career paths, is far greater than it used to be, and will continue to increase; placing greater reliance on the concept of life-long learning in which the HE sector has a primary role to play. Within the HE sector, and in tandem with the emergence of new technology, the nature of the academic role is changing, and boundaries between the role of the academic and the role of others in the university / HE workplace is becoming blurred. There are also increasing tensions between specialisation and generalisation of work function, and between the utilisation of services of persons directly employed by universities, others whose full-time employment is split between the university and one or more other employers, and others who are engaged on a casual or transient basis and are perhaps principally based off-shore. Multi-dimensional workforces of this nature pose challenges in relation to flexibility of individual employment arrangements, performance management, evaluation of performance and quality control and risk management.

## **3. Changing Business Models**

The drive for greater efficiencies leads to an examination of business process and the effective use of campus infrastructure, from both a time-use and technological support perspective. Some universities may seek to devote an increasing proportion of their resources to their physical infrastructure and “the campus experience for students”, whilst other universities may concentrate their attention on the “virtual environment” of teaching and learning. The way in which capital and like resources are directed by individual universities is likely to have a fundamental impact on the nature of the workforce required by the university, particularly in terms of the mix of academic and support staff needed by each university and their working arrangements. The increasing role played by some universities in the delivery of vocational education and training also has impacts upon the nature of the university workforce needed to deliver those offerings. The potential for institutional mergers is also a relevant consideration, as is the potential for increasing competition for Australian students from universities based off-shore.

The broader issue of external engagement with stakeholders is also likely to impact on the way universities go about doing their work, and therefore the capabilities required by staff. For those universities operating in an increasingly global context this also brings cultural and diversity issues into consideration.

#### **4. Analysis of Student Expectations**

Student expectations are forever increasing, and student mobility supported by a Demand Driven System is placing demands on universities to deliver in line with these expectations or suffer declining student enrolments. These expectations are also closely linked to the employability of graduates. Measurement of university performance is becoming a mantra for government, and student awareness of their entitlements and demands for high quality will further increase in a deregulated student fee environment, should that be legislated. There is also a direct correlation between the extent of the diversity of the student population and the need for the provision of tailored support services to meet particular needs. Universities that have a focus on the “campus experience” will invariably have demands placed upon them in their capacity as “landlord” for students occupying on-site or off-site student accommodation.

#### **5. Future Workforce Needs of Higher Education in Australia and their Implications**

The workforce of the future will look different to what it does today. Demographic factors will have a significant impact, as will the nature of jobs and the skill-sets and qualifications that employers will be demanding. Trends in these areas with respect to the Australian workforce as a whole, along with global trends in economies that Australia can look to for predictive guidance, will assist in helping universities to understand what industry and government will be expecting of them into the future to ensure the delivery of workforce needs.

Of concern in this research project are the future needs of the HE workforce. In anticipation of change, much of it disruptive change, the HE sector needs to prepare for significant shifts in the capability base of the workforce. There is also a need to identify and plan for any fundamental rethinking of the type of workforce required and the roles and responsibilities that will be necessary to meet both internal strategic priorities for each university, and respond to the changing environment in which they operate

**Research Methodologies:** It is expected that the successful tenderer will utilise qualitative research methodology, supplemented by quantitative methodology and data. Use of additional ethnographic or other exploratory approaches would also be welcomed. Analysis of existing research, public data sets and applying some forward forecasts based on available data would also be an expected part of this project. However, these suggested research methodologies are for guidance only and the successful tenderer will need to detail the methodology that will be used to best meet the requirements as outlined in this consultancy brief.

##### **1. Qualitative**

The qualitative methodology will include in-depth interviews, focus groups and forums to engage wider community, staff and student organisations.

## 2. Quantitative

The quantitative methodology will include the use of online survey instruments to gather segmented or national data.

## 3. Ethnography and other exploratory approaches

The use of ethnography and other exploratory approaches will give relevance to understanding the lives of young people in new roles, new industries etc.

**Output Required:** The findings resulting from this research and the impact of environmental and other factors on what will be required of the future HE workforce will be presented in a comprehensive report to the client. The report will contain an effectively communicated and visually engaging analysis, including data-based observations, strategic recommendations and thought leadership material. The output from this project will therefore need to be:

- Easily readable: This project is intended to start conversations across the HE sector and engage all stakeholders in discussing the future workforce needs of universities. The more the output is summarised, sharable and facilitates discussion the more useful it will be.
- Visually attractive: While the report will necessarily be comprehensive and the methodologies robust, output forms including visual summaries, infographics and other visual elements are encouraged.
- Actionable: It is desirable for the output to include insights, recommendations, implications and applications, rather than just pure analysis and commentary.

**Delivery of Outputs:** The research is to be conducted, and the report presented to the client, by mid December 2015.

**Submissions:** The submission to complete the commissioned research is due by 5pm (AEST) on Wednesday 23 September 2015.

**Budget:** The consultants are invited to submit a quotation for the commissioned research, with fees and expenses not to exceed \$350,000.

**Submission Requirements:** Tenderers should supply the following material to register an expression of interest:

- 1) A cover letter of no more than 1 page
- 2) A supporting document containing the following:
  - a. Outline of how you will fulfil the research requirements - 10 pages maximum
  - b. Full fee structure (all fees are to be GST inclusive) – clearly specifying the number of consultancy hours involved

- c. Project timeline
- d. Capacity to undertake the project in the required timeframe
- e. Details of personnel to be engaged on the project
- f. References to similar works performed

**Insurance Details:** Tenderers need to provide the client with current and relevant certificates of insurance that will be maintained throughout the project

### **Assessment of Tender Responses:**

Tender responses will need to exhibit the following:

- Previous experience and successful track record in achieving quality outcomes for similar projects
- Thorough understanding of the nature of the HE sector and wider future workforce needs
- Strong research skills demonstrated across a number of sectors
- Excellence in verbal and written skills to interact with the client and stakeholders

In addition, the following criteria will be applied when assessing the tender responses:

- Does the response demonstrate that it can meet the requested requirements?
- Does the response demonstrate that it can meet the timetable for deliver?
- Does the response meet budget expectations?
- Does the research methodology meet the project objectives?
- Does the response demonstrate an innovative and sustainable approach?

**Other Terms and Conditions:** A further document will be provided containing standard information of a legal nature.

**Copyright and Confidentiality:** The client retains ownership and publishing rights over any documentation and the right of inclusion in other works. All information pertaining to the project will remain confidential until the client approves release.