

e-news



Department of Education,
Training and Youth Affairs

www.detya.gov.au

on higher education

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Informing the Higher Education Sector—March 2001

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getting around

The front page of *e-news on higher education* features a set of icons that take you to the articles inside.

These icons are repeated at the bottom of every page, to guide you to other articles.

accessibility

A HTML 'text-only' copy of e-news has been posted onto our website.

www.detya.gov.au/highered/enews

pages

Articles that run onto the next page have a 'forward' icon at the bottom right hand corner of the page. Select this icon to move forward one page. Subsequent pages will have a 'back' icon that you can use to go back.

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websites

e-news on higher education also has links to relevant websites. To access a website, simply click on the URL when the open hand cursor changes to a pointing hand.

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to exit

Don't have any menus to help you exit?

Select 'Esc' on your keyboard then close the window as per normal.

Note:

You can close the file *and* the application at the same time by selecting the top 'x'.

printing

Use the keystrokes of 'Ctrl P' to launch a print window. Remember, you can print all of the pages or choose to print current page.

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Select 'Esc' on your keyboard. You will then have access to toolbars and menus and you can choose the 'print' icon.

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PELS



Postgraduate Education Loans Scheme

A Postgraduate Education Loans Scheme (PELS) will be introduced in 2002 as part of the Government's *Backing Australia's Ability - An Innovation Action Plan for the Future*, pending the successful passage of legislation. PELS is an income-contingent loan scheme similar to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS).

Eligible students enrolled in fee-paying postgraduate non-research courses will be able to borrow up to the limit of the tuition fee for each semester for the duration of their postgraduate course. Unlike HECS, universities, rather than the Government, will set the tuition prices of courses for which PELS loans are available. There will be no public subsidy for the costs of tuition. The loan will not cover accommodation or other living costs. Loan conditions and repayment arrangements will be similar to those that apply to HECS. Students will begin repaying their loan when their repayment income reaches the minimum threshold for compulsory repayment.

If a student does not take out a PELS loan to cover the cost of their tuition, ie they pay all of the fee for a semester directly to their university, the tuition fee and other self education expenses may be tax deductible if the student is employed and they are undertaking studies relevant to their employment.

This scheme will help significantly in removing financial barriers to people wishing to take up postgraduate non-research courses. It will help more Australians to back their ability and devote their time to investing in further education, training and skills development. We expect that the loans provided under this scheme will amount to some \$995 million over the next five years.

www.hecs.gov.au/pels.htm

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The Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) was established in 2000 as part of the Government's commitment to promoting quality and excellence in university teaching and learning in Australia.

The AUTC has a brief to identify emerging issues in teaching and learning in Australian universities. It administers a grants programme designed to identify and support effective methods of teaching and learning and seeks to promote the dissemination and adoption of such methods across the higher education sector.

The following projects are a small selection of those currently receiving funding under the AUTC programme.

Identifying and Supporting Effective Methods of Teaching Large Classes

The move towards mass education has provided particular challenges for both students and academics. For many university students, particularly those in science and arts

courses, the most common experience of their university education is that of large classes which often use a traditional lecture format. A significant body of literature from Australia and overseas has drawn attention to the issues arising from this arrangement - interaction between students and lecturers, recognition of student diversity as well as the scope of available teaching and assessment methods.

To date, dissemination and uptake of research findings on what constitutes good practice in teaching large classes has, for various reasons, been somewhat limited. In commissioning this project, the AUTC is seeking to address this situation, with a coordinated national dissemination of information and the implementation of long-term strategies to address the issues relating to teaching and learning in large classes. The project, is being undertaken by a University of Queensland team led by Ms Denise Chalmers, Dr Ottmar Lipp and Professor Deborah Terry, and is due for completion in March 2002.

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AUTC projects in progress

(continued)

Identifying and Supporting Effective Methods of Enhancing Learning— Assessing Student Learning

For some years now most Australian universities have attempted systematic induction of staff new to teaching in good practices in assessing student learning. These inductions inevitably include a focus on ways of improving reliability and validity in the setting and marking of examination papers, essays, projects and the like.

Assessment is such a powerful driver of student learning behaviour that it has the power to make or break the efforts of academics to redesign their programmes to encourage more effective learning. Yet in the rapidly changing context in which students learn, the impact of student assessment is largely underestimated and generally poorly understood. This project seeks to address this through the investigation of:

- the scale of the problem of plagiarism;
- issues and best practice in on-line assessment of student work;

- issues and best practice in group assessment;
- impact of class size on forms of assessment;
- impact of changing nature of student expectations and engagement on forms of assessment and standards;
- advice for students unfamiliar with methods of assessment in Australia; and
- advice to academics on ways of improving assessment in the context of large classes and changing student expectations.

The study is being undertaken by Dr Richard James and Professor Craig McInnis from the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne and is due for completion in March 2002.

More information on the AUTC and its activities is available at:

www.autc.gov.au

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ARC Bills passed

The *Australian Research Council Bill 2000* and the *Australian Research Council (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2000* were passed by the Senate and House of Representatives on 7 and 8 March.

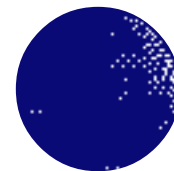
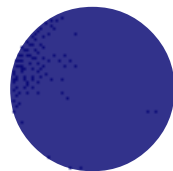
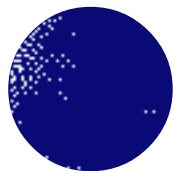
These Bills put in place the central planks of the Government's frameworks for higher education research and research training, which were announced in *Knowledge and Innovation*. In particular, they establish:

- an independent Australian Research Council;
- a robust funding regime for the new National Competitive Grants Programme;

- a block funded Research Training Scheme and Institutional Grants Scheme; and
- eligibility criteria for block funding based on quality assurance processes.

When the Australian Research Council Act commences, the Australian Research Council (ARC) will be re-established as an agency fully independent from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. The ARC will provide policy advice to the Government on research matters as well as have full responsibility for the administration of the competitive peer reviewed schemes to support excellent research conducted by individuals and teams.

www.arc.gov.au



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AUQA appoints CEO

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), established last year by the Australian Ministers for Education, has announced the appointment of **Dr David Woodhouse** as its inaugural Chief Executive.

Dr Woodhouse is currently the Director of the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, a position he will relinquish to take up this position. He has also been the Secretary, then President, of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education since 1995. Between 1990 and 1994 Dr Woodhouse was the Deputy Director of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation. Dr Woodhouse is also the Executive Editor of the international journal, *Quality in Higher Education: Theory and Practice* and has worked extensively in academia both in Australia and overseas.

Dr Woodhouse will bring his wealth of knowledge and experience to bear on the formation of the Agency's audit processes. This places the Agency in a good position to commence audits in the second half of 2001.

The Agency will be located in Melbourne and has a brief to conduct audits of the quality assurance processes of publicly-funded Australian universities, and the accreditation and recognition procedures of the State and Territory higher education authorities.

The audits undertaken of self-accrediting universities will assess the adequacy of each institution's quality assurance processes in the key areas of teaching and learning, research and management. This will include scrutiny of the processes an institution has in place to investigate allegations in relation to academic standards. The audits will also assess the institution's success in maintaining standards consistent with university education in Australia.

The audits will be based on an initial self-assessment by the institute, followed by a site visit by the audit team.

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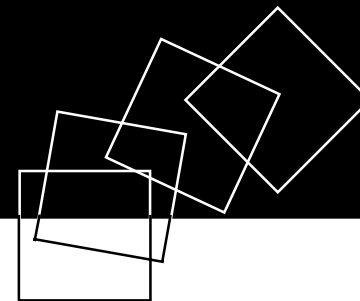
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recent releases

Australia (Country Education Profiles) 3rd edition

This third edition of the *Country Education Profile* for Australia provides a comprehensive description of the Australian education system incorporating the many significant changes that have occurred in Australian education.

This Profile will provide a convenient source of information about the Australian education system for educational

institutions, government agencies, professional bodies, employers and individuals both overseas and within Australia. It is one of the 87 Profiles describing the education systems of countries around the world published by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR).

Released in hard copy in January 2001, this publication is now also available on-line.

www.detya.gov.au/noosr/cep/australia/index.htm

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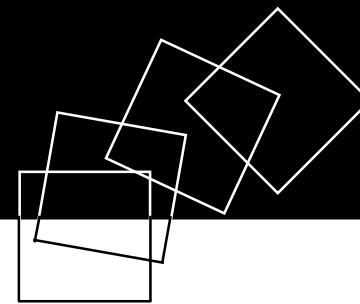
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Access: Effect of campus proximity and socio-economic status on university participation rates in regions

This study uses multivariate analysis to explore the relative importance of socio-economic characteristics and access to university campuses in determining participation rates in metro and non-metro regions. The major findings to emerge are:

- Access (proximity to university campuses) and socio-economic status (SES) of regions contribute to university participation.
- In metropolitan areas educational aspirations (as measured by education and occupation levels) explain the bulk of the variation in participation rates, although the

level of access and the level of economic resources explain a significant proportion of that variation.

- In non-metropolitan areas overall variation in participation rates is not as high as the variation in metropolitan regions. In exploring the variation that does occur, none of the variables is dominant, with the level of economic resources and access being marginally more important than the level of education and occupation.
- While the number of university places per head of population in non-metropolitan areas is significantly lower

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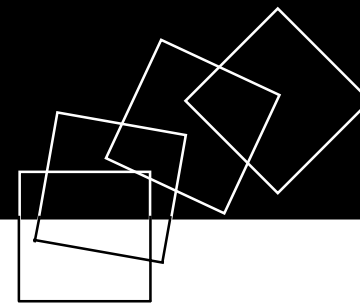
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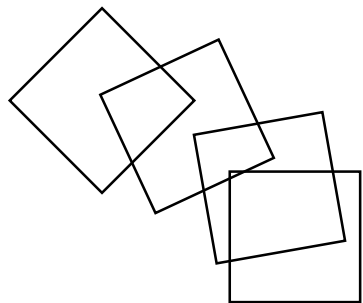
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than in metropolitan areas, equality of provision would only reduce the difference in participation to a small degree.

- The relationship between participation, SES and access to university differs significantly between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. It appears that community attitudes to education would need to change fundamentally before university participation rates in non-metropolitan areas would approach those of metropolitan areas.



favourites

- **e-news on higher education**
www.detya.gov.au/highered/enews

- **Backing Australia's Ability**
www.innovation.gov.au/iap

- **Higher Education Report for the 2001 to 2003 Triennium**
www.detya.gov.au/highered/he_report/2001_2003

- **ECU Service 2000: A client-centred transformation of corporate services**
(Millicent Poole et al)
www.detya.gov.au/highered/eippubs/eip00_16

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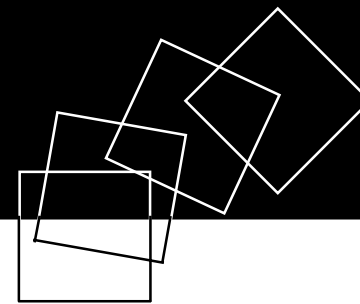
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websites

Main page for DETYA's Higher Education Division
www.detya.gov.au/highered

HECS—higher Education Contribution Scheme
www.hecs.gov.au

Which Course? Which University?
www.detya.gov.au/tenfields

National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition
www.detya.gov.au/noosr

links

Higher Education Links can help you access ...

- Australian State and Territory Education Departments
- Australian Education Organisations
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- Australian Universities - Admissions Centres
- Careers Information
- MCEETYA
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www.detya.gov.au/highered/links.htm



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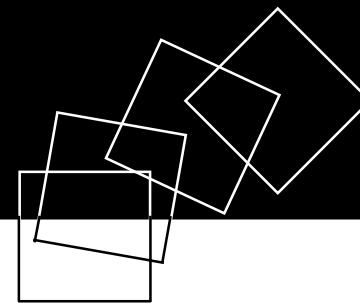
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how it works

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what it does

Once registered, subscribers will be sent a weekly email (usually on Monday evenings) with a brief description of any changes and the address for such pages.

At www.detya.gov.au select *Site Change Subscription Service*

internet versions

Most of our publications—from October 1996 onward—are available in full on the DETYA website at:

www.detya.gov.au/highered/repts.htm

hard copies

Copies of most of our publications can be purchased from AusInfo's Government Information Bookshops. Locations and contact details for the AusInfo bookshops are available at:

www.dofa.gov.au/infoaccess/infoaccess/ia_infoshops.htm

enquiries

General enquiries about publications can be emailed to

highered@detya.gov.au

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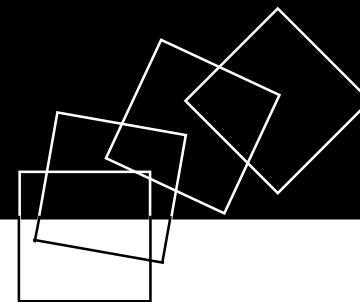
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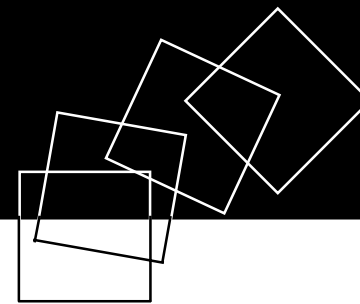
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