



Monthly e-Newsletter – October 2007

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EDITORIAL

Apologies for the lateness of this month's Newsletter. I indulged myself with three weeks leave – a trip to south-western China with my 13-year-old son, followed by a week in Malaysia. At the end, it was clear that I'm older than he thought I was, and considerably older than I thought I was.

I did a bit of reading while I was away – *Mr Pip* by Lloyd Jones was a winner (and by the time you read this, might well have won the Man Booker Prize). *Madam Bovary* again. I don't read many books twice. I'm glad I found time to go back to it. And *Not Quite the Diplomat* by Chris Patten, now Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, of Oxford University and of Newcastle University. This was as close to reading about education as I came. So consequently, this edition of the Newsletter is a little thin on professional reading tips.

As always, ideas and content for the newsletter are welcome, as is your feedback. Please take the opportunity to share with your colleagues. Subject to space and relevance to members, the newsletter can run job vacancies and items on upcoming events.

Contact me at: [rob@](mailto:rob@sharpwords.com.au) with sharpwords.com.au

Back copies of Newsletters are available here:
<http://www.aair.org.au/Pages/Newsletters.html>

JOB VACANCY

**Head, Planning, Quality and Review
Southern Cross University**

Southern Cross University is seeking an experienced professional to lead the University's Planning, Quality and Review Unit.

As a key member of the senior management team the successful candidate will be responsible for the coordination of project initiatives across the areas of planning, policy, quality and institutional research and reporting.

Full details, including selection criteria, first go to www.scu.edu.au/jobs

Enquiries:
Professor William MacGillivray
Phone: (02) 6620 3399
Email: [dvc@](mailto:dvc@scu.edu.au) with scu.edu.au

Closing date: Wednesday, 31 October 2007

AIN'T IT THE TRUTH

One does not choose one's subject matter – one submits to it.

- Gustave Flaubert

AAIR Committee members

- President:** Ivan Skaines, University of Western Sydney
- Immediate Past President:** Wendy Marchment, Griffith University
- Vice President:** Josephine Palermo, Deakin University
- Hon Secretary:** Dean Ward, Edith Cowan University
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- Bruce Guthrie, Graduate Careers Australia
- Don Johnston, Southern Cross University
- Dave Marr, Australian National University
- Andrea Matulick, University of South Australia
- Rob Sheehan, Sharp Words Editing & Writing Services (Victoria)
- AAIR website:** <http://www.aair.org.au/>

AAIR 2007 FORUM

CHANGE, EVIDENCE & IMPLEMENTATION: IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

28-30 NOVEMBER, 2007

CROWN PLAZA, DARLING HARBOUR, SYDNEY

Ivan Skaines, AAIR President, reports that the AAIR 2007 Forum is ready for you.

Keynote speakers are:

- Mr Ian Hawke, Assistant Director-General (International, Non-State and Higher Education), Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and the Arts
- Professor Kerri-Lee Krause, Chair in Higher Education, and Director, Griffith Institute for Higher Education
- Professor Geoff Scott, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality), University of Western Sydney

(Further details on the keynote speakers appear at the end of this Newsletter.)

On Wednesday 28 November the program offers four parallel streams on Planning and Quality, Surveys and Reporting, Students, and Sustainability. The streams include eight workshops and three Special Interest Groups (SIGs). The SIGs are:

- Data Warehouse – National Benchmarking System for Higher Education DEST Statistics
- DEST Statistics
- Developing an Historical Australian Graduate Survey Database.

On 29 and 30 November the program offers 5 parallel streams on Change, Quality Outcomes, Improvements, Leading and Managing, and Working Together. More than 40 presentations are scheduled with presenters from Australia and New Zealand, China, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, and the USA.

The draft program is on the AAIR website: <http://www.aair.org.au/Forum2007/DraftProgram.pdf>

Take the opportunity to share ideas and conundrums with your colleagues, 96 of whom were registered by early October. More is never too many – feel free to circulate this newsletter to your contacts, or direct them to the Forum website for registration and other details:

www.aair.org.au/Forum2007/Index.html

**The 2007 AAIR Forum is hosted by the
University of Western Sydney**

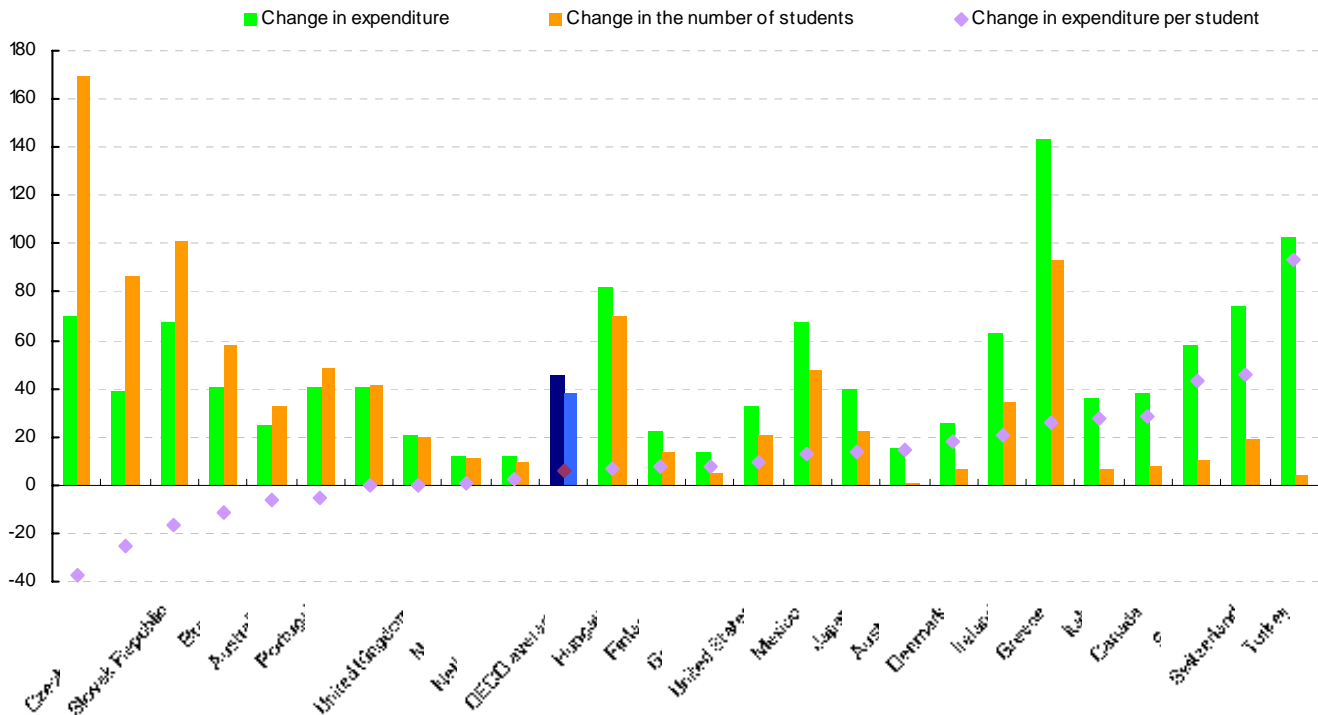
**The 2007 AAIR Forum is sponsored by
Graduate Careers Australia**

SPENDING ON HIGHER EDUCATION – OECD COMPARISONS

You might care to ferret around in the *OECD Factbook 2007: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*. The chart below comes from it. It plots changes in real expenditure on higher education institutions. It's here: http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,3343,en_21571361_34374092_34420734_1_1_1_1,00.html

Education at a Glance 2007 covers all education sectors. It's here: http://www.oecd.org/document/30/0,3343,en_2649_39263294_39251550_1_1_1_1,00.html

Education - Expenditure on education - Expenditure on tertiary education
Changes in real expenditure on educational institutions in tertiary education
Percentage change 1995-2003



PODDIE'S CORNER

The video podcast is making its move at Swinburne, presumably backing in that which ever party forms Australia's next government, broadband speeds are going to improve.

Swinburne's Office of Research has a selection of videos for you to choose from, dealing with things as murky as dark matter, the growth of fungi and laser-trapping. Some of this is ooh-aah stuff – well, my major was in literature after all. Tune in: <http://www.swinburne.edu.au/research/ResearchWatch/ResearchPodcasts/index.html>

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

Design and Analysis of Surveys –Statistical Consulting Centre, Melbourne Uni – 22-27 November, 2007

Think about it. You start in Melbourne on 22 November, finish up there on 27 November, then go to Sydney for the AAIR Forum from 28-30 November. It's a very good plan, isn't it?

The Statistical Consulting Centre at the University of Melbourne is offering a course on Design and Analysis of Surveys, from Thursday 22 November to Tuesday 27 November, 2007 (4 days).

The following topics will be covered:

- Samples and populations.

- Survey methods: face-to-face interviews, mail questionnaires, phone interviews, on-line surveys. Other methods.
- Questionnaire design: types of questions, wording and ordering; layout and length of questionnaire. Pilot testing.
- Measurement: types of data, measurement scales, reliability.
- Sources of error in surveys: random and systematic; sampling and non-sampling error. Sample size.
- Sampling methods: simple random sampling, stratified sampling, systematic sampling, cluster sampling, multi-stage sampling, non-probability methods.
- Non-response: its effect and how to address it.
- Sensitive questions, confidentiality.
- Data entry, coding and checking. Multiple responses, open questions and missing responses.
- Estimation of population means, totals and proportions. Standard errors and confidence intervals.
- Cross-tabulations of categorical data. The chi-squared test and Fisher's exact test.
- Analysis of ordinal responses.
- Analysis of data from combinations of questions.

Participants will need to have used statistical methods at a basic level.

More information about the course can be found at: <http://www.scc.ms.unimelb.edu.au/courses.html>
Or ring Fiona Malone on (03) 8344 6995.

International Meeting of University Administrators, August 2008

Melvyn Cornish, University Secretary at The University of Edinburgh, has contacted us about the International Meeting of University Administrators (IMUA) to be held in Vancouver from Sunday, August 17th to Thursday, August 21st, 2008. Melvyn is the Conference Chair.

The main theme of the 2008 conference is Globalization. The sub-themes are:

1. Evolution of Learning
2. Research Commercialization
3. Sustainability
4. Leading & Organizing Academic Institutions of the Future

There is more detail here: <http://www.imua2008.ca/>

VALA Conference – February, 2008

What is a library these days? What's it for? Who's it for? What's in it? These were simple questions once upon a time. Now we have to find out all over again.

The biennial VALA conference will have a crack at the questions and the answers. As the website notes: 'The conference theme of Libraries/changing spaces, virtual places was chosen as it reflects the profound impact that over forty years of automation is now having on the nature of libraries, changes that affect the way libraries and cultural organisations relate to their communities and in the networks of partnerships and relationships that they must build in order to provide relevant services for those communities.'

The conference is on from February 5-7, 2008, in glorious Melbourne. More details here: <http://www.vala.org.au/conf2008.htm>

IT IS WRITTEN

Expression of the interesting

Ann-Marie Priest wrote a terrific essay on the undergraduate student essay, published in The Oz Higher Education supplement on October 10. Reminded me of Joan Didion's observation that 'I write to understand what I think'.

Worth passing on to everyone for whom the purpose of the academic essay is a mystery. Here it is:

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22558399-27702,00.html>

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. The VC's blog

Macquarie University's VC, Steven Schwartz, is always on the edge somewhere. In September he started blogging. It's well worth checking in from time to time. I think we should encourage the enterprise by adding our comments. You could start by responding to his views on rankings: <http://wpmu.innovation.cfl.mq.edu.au/stevenschwartz/2007/10/09/new-library-will-have-personal-touch/>

2. Stephen Smith on VET/TAFE

Now that the election is finally on, we'll be overwhelmed by policy papers and promises. While you are waiting you might like to get some practice in by reading this speech delivered on 25 September by Stephen Smith – the ALP education spokesperson – to the TAFE Directors Australia 2007 National (and inaugural) Convention. There's a lot of politics in it, but cut your way through and read the policy:

<http://www.alp.org.au/media/0907/speedut250.php>

3. Doing an apprenticeship: What young people think

The NCVER is a national treasure. The quality and breadth of its research publications is a wonderful thing.

Early this month it released the report *Doing an apprenticeship: What young people think*. I've only scanned it, but it is on the list for closer reading. One of the interesting results is the extent of parental influence on the decision to do an apprenticeship. 'Students', the report says, 'were almost evenly divided between those who said that parental views would affect their decisions to *some extent* and those who replied that these views would affect their decisions to *little or no extent* (40.3% and 37.5%, respectively).' Only 12% reported their parent's would be influential to a great extent. It was ever thus...

Read more:

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1797.html>

4. e-Portfolios in VET

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework has done us all a favour. It has produced an accessible overview of what an e-portfolio could be, and how best to support students to develop and use them (including useful guidelines about what kind of systems and business rules would be necessary to make them work).

Goes by the name of *Developing e-portfolios for VET: Policy issues and interoperability*.

While it has a VET focus, this report wouldn't be out of place in a school, an adult and community education provider, or a university. Nice job: <http://e-standards.flexiblelearning.net.au/docs/vet-eportfolio-report-v1-0.pdf>

5. Who wants a worker like this?

There are dozens of times when you need to know what the job market is, and is forecast to be, for particular kinds of workers. *Australian Jobs* is a handy high level reference, issued by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. It provides an overview by state/territory, industry sectors, and occupations/skills. Available here as a pdf:

<http://www.workplace.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/00DD2708-97DA-47AF-8A7A15F12196C447/0/AustralianJobs2007Workplace.pdf>

6. Reading the runes of student evaluations

Interpreting the results of student evaluations of teaching quality is often frustrating for those trying to work out the connection between the stats and learning and teaching practice. Curtin Uni has a set of online resources that help its staff to make some links:

<http://evaluate.curtin.edu.au/improving/>

7. Benchmarking in Australian Higher Education

AUQA has just put on its website a report by Anthony Stella and David Woodhouse called *Benchmarking in Australian Higher Education: A Thematic Analysis of AUQA Audit Reports*. I haven't strayed into it yet. Right here:

<http://www.auqa.com.au/qualityenhancement/publications/occasional/publications/>

8. Melbourne is a university kind of town

In August the Committee for Melbourne released a report called *Higher Education at a Tipping Point*, prepared by the Committee's Higher Education Taskforce. It argues a pretty good line about why universities matter to Melbourne to business, as you might expect – but the social impacts aren't neglected by any means and it ties the university into a range of other bread and butter policy areas like transport planning. And it suggests options for dealing with the decline in university funding. Hop in: <http://www.melbourne.org.au/>

9. What a HEEF

The Parliament of Australia's Parliamentary Library prepares Bills Digests that often help take the spin out of legislative change. So it is with the Digest on the *Higher Education Endowment Fund Bill 2007*: <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/BD/2007-08/08bd038.pdf>

10. Margin of error

Education Sector – a US think tank – has produced a report on how the industry that has grown up to support educational testing in schools has undermined schools and policy. The report is titled *Margins of Error: The Education Testing Industry in the No Child Left Behind Era*. It notes that testing continues to be controversial, but it argues that if politicians insist on testing they would be well-advised to insist on doing it well. Here you go: http://www.educationsector.org/usr_doc/Margins_of_Error.pdf

11. Research policy in the UK

The Sainsbury Review into the UK government's science and innovation policies was released in early October. Entitled *The Race to the Top*, it contains a host of policy recommendations that have a ring of Antipodean familiarity about them.

In respect of universities in particular, Lord Sainsbury of Turville notes: 'A diversity of excellence is required, with research universities focusing on curiosity-driven research, teaching and knowledge transfer, and business-facing universities focusing on the equally important economic mission of professional teaching, user-driven research and problem-solving with local and regional companies. Research, teaching and knowledge transfer are fundamental roles for any HEI. But the way these are done will be very different and some students will be attracted by one type of educational experience and some by the other'.

It's not elegantly written, but you ought treat yourself to all 192 pages anyway: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/5/E/sainsbury_review051007.pdf

12. Innovation policy in China

If the recommendations from the Sainsbury review in the UK sounded familiar, the recommendations from the OECD's review of innovation policy in China just sounded hard. It's a tough gig, running China: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/20/39177453.pdf>

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

AAIR 2007 FORUM

Mr Ian Hawke

Ian Hawke was appointed Assistant Director-General (International, Non-State and Higher Education) of the Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and the Arts, in March 2006. He was formerly Director, Queensland Office of Higher Education.

In his current role, Ian is responsible for legislation, policy development, accreditation, and quality assurance of programs and related services covering Queensland's non-state and grammar schools, universities and private higher education providers, and for regulatory and commercial activities in international education.

Ian is a Director of both the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre and of the Australian Universities Quality Agency. He is a subject specialist on the register of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation and a member of the Oman Accreditation Council's Register of External Reviewers.

Before his appointment as a director of AUQA, Ian served as an auditor in audits of the University of Wollongong and the higher education accreditation functions of the New South Wales government. He is also an international auditor with the Council on Higher Education in South Africa, this year serving on the audit panel for the Tshwane University of Technology.

Professor Kerri-Lee Krause

Professor Krause holds a Chair in Higher Education and is Director of the Griffith Institute for Higher Education.

Her research expertise spans many higher education policy areas, with a particular focus on the quality of the student experience and its implications for learning, teaching and policy.

In 2004/5 Dr Krause led the project team that undertook a national study of the first year experience in Australian universities. This landmark national first year experience trend study extends the outcomes of studies of first year students in Australian universities in 1994 and 1999.

She currently holds a three year Australian Research Council Discovery Grant to examine the effects of disciplinary cultures on approaches to teaching and learning, in collaboration with Professor Richard James, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.

Professor Krause leads a national study of the teaching-research nexus, funded by the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching. This project involves extensive collaboration with partners at the University of Melbourne, Queensland University of Technology and UK higher education experts, including Professors Alan Jenkins, Mick Healey and Paul Blackmore.

Professor Geoff Scott

Professor Scott is Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality) at the University of Western Sydney.

His specific areas of research and writing are strategic change management, quality improvement and leadership in post-secondary and higher education.

In 2005-6 Geoff was director of the national CEQuery project: "Accessing the student voice". This project investigated what 94,000 students said engages them in productive learning and retains them in different fields of higher education. Geoff is currently director of a Carrick Institute project investigating the key capabilities required for effective leadership in various Learning and Teaching roles in universities, and what forms of support optimise the development of these capabilities.

He has been a member of advisory groups to the Federal Minister for Education on quality assurance for Australia's offshore higher education programs and the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. Geoff is a member of the national organising committee for the Australian Universities Quality Forum.

In 2000 he was elected Fellow of the Australian College of Education for services to higher education nationally, and internationally for his work in countries as diverse as Cambodia and South Africa.

More information on the AAIR 2007 Forum

Conference theme:

Change, Evidence & Implementation: Improving Higher Education in Uncertain Times

Dates: 28-30 November, 2007

Venue: Crown Plaza, Darling Harbour, Sydney

Forum website for registration and other details:

www.aair.org.au/Forum2007/Index.html

Draft program:

<http://www.aair.org.au/Forum2007/DraftProgram.pdf>