



Monthly e-Newsletter – January 2008

What's in this edition?

The AAIR Newsletter Quiz.....	1
Ain't it the Truth.....	1
AIR Summer Data Policy Institute – AAIR Fellowship	2
AAIR 2008 Forum – Canberra.....	3
For the Poddies, Voddies & Bloggies.....	3
Places to Go – Things to Do.....	3-4
It is Written.....	4
Newsletter Notes.....	4-9
Answers to quiz questions.....	10

EDITORIAL

Welcome to 2008.

Hope the start to the New Year is a gentle one. With luck, you'll be on leave and won't see this until late in January. If you're involved in selection, no such luck.

It would be great to have your input to the Newsletter in 2008. Editorial policy is pretty much limited to:

- saying who items come from
- application of a very broad and ill-defined relevance test
- a preference for brevity.

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, from June 2007, are available on the AAIR website:
<http://www.aair.org.au/Pages/Newsletters.html>

THE AAIR NEWSLETTER NEW YEAR QUIZ

Just for the heck of it, there are eight quiz questions in this month's Newsletter.

There are no prizes for correct answers. Only ego and pride are at stake.

Here's the first one.

QUIZ QUESTION 1.

In what year were women granted the right to graduate officially at Cambridge University?

Answers are on the last page of the Newsletter.

AIN'T IT THE TRUTH

Sometimes, however, a lecturer will abandon notes and outlines and speak passionately and directly, her thoughts and images passing through the class like a series of electric currents.

- Maria Tumarkin, *Courage*
MUP Publishing, 2007

<http://www.mup.unimelb.edu.au/catalogue/0-522-85368-4.html>

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

Hon Treasurer and Membership Secretary:
Marian Thakur, Monash University

General Committee:

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/>

AIR 2008 SUMMER DATA POLICY INSTITUTE WASHINGTON, DC – 8-15 JUNE

AAIR Fellowship available This is your opportunity to attend

AAIR is seeking expressions of interest for the following development opportunity to advance your (or a staff member's) statistical analysis skills, and to extend your networks in the USA.

AAIR has received one Fellowship for the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) 2008 Summer Data Policy Institute. More information is available at: <http://www.airweb.org/?page=1084>

The Institute is scheduled for 8-15 June, 2008, in Washington, DC.

Thanks to a grant from the US National Science Foundation (NSF), all expenses in Washington will be covered and up to US\$700 towards airfare costs is provided.

The Institute is an intensive, hands-on experience. Institute participants receive hands-on training from the directors of national surveys and databases. Participants also partake in policy seminars led by experts in postsecondary education policy analysis.

The criteria the AAIR Executive Committee will use to assess applications are as follows:

1. Current membership of AAIR.
2. Demonstrated high level knowledge of statistical methods and experience in the use of statistical software packages (ie, SPSS, SAS).
3. Demonstrated knowledge of data analysis related to educational statistics and/or other evidence that shows you would be able to contribute effectively from an Australian perspective.
4. Evidence of support from your institution and/or other source of funding to cover airfare and incidental expenses above US\$700.
5. Willingness to make a presentation (in person or in writing) to the 2008 AAIR Forum in Canberra concerning the experience at the 2008 Data Policy Institute.

To apply please send a brief (3-4 pages) proposal to Ivan Skaines, AAIR President at i.skaines@uws.edu.au with uws.edu.au by COB Friday, 29 February 2008.

Applicants should address both AAIR's criteria (1-5) above plus the Data Policy Institute instructions for submitting proposals available at <http://www.airweb.org/?page=1084>

Previous recipients of the fellowship were:

- Bono Poon (ECU) in 2005
- Andrew McCann (UTS) in 2004
- Rob Rispoli (ECU) in 2003.

2008 AAIR FORUM –

ANU, CANBERRA

19-21 NOVEMBER

Enhancing Quality Research: A Global Perspective

The 2008 AAIR Forum will be in Canberra from the 19-21 November 2008 at the Hyatt Hotel.

This year's theme will be:
Enhancing Quality Research: A Global Perspective.

The theme allows a focus on benchmarking of our institutions' research performance and the analysis of research management information.

Collaborative research ventures are becoming increasingly more global. Institutional researchers need to be more aware than ever before of this broader, 'global perspective' and to develop ways of providing information and analysis on research collaboration.

The 2008 Forum will provide a range of presentations from experts in benchmarking quality research performance within this new global perspective.

The Australian National University and its organising partners are proud to host a Forum with a clear focus on research. And Canberra, as the nation's capital, will form an inspiring and distinctive backdrop for our social and collaborative activities.

We intend to keep you updated on Forum planning through the AAIR Newsletter, so keep an eye out.

The next thing planned is to get the Forum website up and running by early February. This should include a 'call for papers', so start pulling your ideas together.

If you'd like further information, please drop a line to Dave Marr at ANU – dave.marr@anu.edu.au

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES & BLOGGIES

Community@Brighton

There's a wee blurb dressed in pink and grey on the home page. It says: 'Community@Brighton is a social networking system for students and staff at the University of Brighton. Feel free to explore the site, and you will be able to view anything the owner has chosen to make publicly available'.

You can't see the lot, but you can see a lot anyway:

<http://community.brighton.ac.uk/>

QUIZ QUESTION 2.

How many undergraduate students were there at Harvard University in the 2006-2007 academic year?

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

2008 Quantitative Analysis of Teaching and Learning in Business, Economics and Commerce Forum

When – 8 February, so best get your skates on.

Melbourne Uni's Faculty of Economics and Commerce has run three of these fora, so it's really an annual event now. Open to all comers.

Papers will consider topics such as:

- What can be done to Improve Student Success in First Year Statistics?
- Teaching Survey Evaluations as a Performance Evaluation Tool: How Much of a Good Teaching Score is beyond a Lecturer's Control
- Does Regular Online Testing Enhance Student Learning?: Evidence from a Large First-Year Quantitative Methods Course

There's more info about the Forum here (along with a very modest link at the bottom of the page inviting you to register online):

http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/teaching_staff/forum/index.html

Or download the Forum flyer here:

http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/contact_us/pamphlet_2008.pdf

HERDSA 2008

The 2008 conference of that venerable body – the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia – will be in Rotorua NZ from 1-4 July. Another hardship posting. The conference theme is 'Engaging Communities'.

Call for contributions is open til 26 February, so the program isn't up yet, except for pre-Conference workshops including:

- A reflective cycle built for two: A workshop on peer observation of teaching
- Getting your teaching research funded: Writing successful grant applications For Carrick and Ako Aotearoa
- Walking and talking: Doing academic development through conversation

More here: <http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2008/>

International Conference on Student Retention

The Education Policy Institute, and studentretention.org, are hosting Retention 2008, an international conference on student retention. From May 28-30, 2008, it's at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina. Sounds tough, I know. But put yourself out:
<http://www.educationalpolicy.org/retention2008.html>

IT IS WRITTEN

Lots of thesis writers struggle mightily with the demands of writing. Understandable. Any text of thesis length is a complex and demanding beast.

I thought this paper was a bit of a fresh air on the question of how to help out. 'Supporting Education PhD and DEd students to become confident academic writers: an evaluation of thesis writers' circles', by Wendy Larcombe, Anthony McCosker and Kieran O'Loughlin.

You can access it online, published in Volume 4, Issue 1, 2007, of the very excellent *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* – a terrific enterprise of the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources at the University of Woolongong.

Download the article here:
http://jutlp.uow.edu.au/2007_v04_i01/larcombe009.html

AAIR e-Newsletter – January 2008

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. VSU – oops, there goes the baby ...

The silliest thing I ever head of was the introduction of voluntary student unionism. VSU put life back into a very tired old cliché – throwing the baby out with the bathwater. So much lost and so little gained.

For a sense of what may have been lost, read the 'VSU Impact Study: A study on the impact of voluntary student unionism legislation at universities across Australia':
http://www.unisport.com.au/uploads/res/1_1825.pdf

Released in November 07, it was commissioned by Australian University Sport (AUS) and the Australasian Campus Union Managers' Association (ACUMA).

I want to read the rejoinder about what was gained.

What I wanted was the compromise. I guess I like to take some principles with a grain of salt.

2. The next step is a doozey

It's heartening to hear and read of so much thought and action concerned to support a sound academic transition from Year 12 to university. One of the AAIR newsletters late last year recommended a reading of Ann-Marie Priest's essay in *The Oz* about uni students learning the art of essay writing – worth a look if you didn't make it on the last mention:
<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22558399-27702,00.html>.

Superficially, it seems funny that it's necessary to teach essay writing to first year students – haven't they been writing essays since primary school? Liam Semler – senior lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Sydney – has one public outing on this question in *The Oz Higher Ed Supplement* on 21 November last:
<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,22792734-27702,00.html>

The requirements of the essay form are different in secondary school and university, the context is different, the expectations are different. It's reasonable to expect first years will find the gap and at times perilous. Semler reckons a bit more understanding wouldn't go astray.

Just as important – maybe more important in the evolving scheme of things educational in the Wide Brown Land – is Sydney's Shakespeare Reloaded initiative, which Semler proselytises for on the ABC website:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/12/18/2122242.htm>

The journo – Jennifer Macey – does a top job of explaining it all so I'll be brief. The initiative links the Uni to Barker Secondary College in North Sydney, supported by an ARC grant. It's all about making a weave for learning rather than persisting with a different set of threads for each education sector.

3. More weaving for learning

As noted in the December AAIR Newsletter, Tassie is embarking on a systematic exercise to bring the education sectors together – see *Qualifications and Skills for Tasmania Tomorrow*:

<http://tomorrow.education.tas.gov.au/home/Consultation-Reponse.pdf>

Well, that's Tassie – it's small and therefore easier, some have observed. You can't do it in a bigger place. Well, it's easy to scoff, says me. Take the Coffs Harbour Education Campus (CHEC), for example. Nestled inside the biggest state in the Australian Federation is a model that's working, bringing together the secondary, TAFE and HE sectors, and throwing in an ESL specialty just for good measure. The CHEC website is here:

<http://chwww.scu.edu.au/about.htm>

Getting your head around the structural arrangements can be a bit challenging. Fear not! The CHEC org chart is here:

<http://chwww.scu.edu.au/assets/pdf/CHEC%20Organisational%20Chart.doc>

4. Just a step to the left, and a jump to the right

Making sense of how to move between the TAFE and HE sectors can be a bit challenging, too. Goodness knows we need to get better at making these pathways work.

So good for TAFE Queensland, which a few months ago released *TAFE Queensland pathways to university*:

http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/resources/pdf/TQ_pathways_to_uni.pdf

QUIZ QUESTION 3.

How many Australian Commonwealth Ministers of Education have there been since 1968? Name them.

5. The basics of school systems that really work

McKinsey and Co has turned its attention to identifying the signal characteristics of the best school systems. There's more to school, of course, than academic attainment alone. But if we focus on just that for the moment, then this report seems to me quite important.

The report is called *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*. It comes down to three basics, and they don't cost the earth:

- get the best teachers
- put the best instruction on the ground
- for struggling kids, intervene early and often.

The other thing to note about this report is its entertaining layout:

http://www.mckinsey.com/client/service/socialsector/resources/pdf/Worlds_School_Systems_Final.pdf

6. To begin at the very beginning

The Joint Principals Associations – a togetherness of principals from Australia's public, private and Catholic schools – undertook an online survey involving teachers with less than three years teaching experience.

If McKinsey's have got it right and the first big task is to get the best teachers into schools, then these survey results have a lot to say about how to hang on to good ones, and what the teacher training and PD requirement is, given that one quarter of all respondents reckon they will leave teaching, even though they like it.

Amongst the interesting outcomes from the survey is that nearly half of all respondents had at least one other career before teaching – the diversity is extraordinary.

Here you go:

<http://aspa.asn.au/images/surveys/2007beginningteacherreport.pdf>

7. Ranking Canadian schools

There's an infatuation in education with putting institutions in rank order. We've been doing it in a frenzy in HE. It's probably coming to VET in Australia in a big way. Australia is playing around the edges with it in the secondary sector.

In Canada the Fraser Institute – a think tank with a liking for neo-classical economics and for social libertarianism – is going the whole hog on ranking both elementary and secondary schools:
<http://www.fraserinstitute.org/reportcards/schoolperformance/>

8. Finishing high school in the US – yes or no?

Secondary school completion rates are a hot topic. Australia's new Rudd government, for example, has committed to lift the Year 12 completion rate from 75% to 90% by 2020.

An interesting US study suggests that the high school graduation rate in the US hit a high of 80% in the 1960s and has fallen away to around 75% now. If that's right, the implications for policy and practice would be profound. Or not? Maybe there's a ceiling? The paper by Heckman and LaFontaine is published by the National Bureau for Economic Research. It's titled *The American high school graduation rate: Trends and levels*, and for your delectation this 60 pager is here:
www.nber.org/tmp/7319-w13670.pdf

Plumb the projections for high school graduation in the US in Chapter 3 of the US National Centre for Educational Statistics recent report, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2016*. Then measure the gap between these data and the Heckman-LaFontaine take on things:
<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/projections/projections2016/>

QUIZ QUESTION 4.

In which year were Australian universities first permitted to charge market fees to international students?

9. QA in the US

There are some mighty scraps going on in the US about the role and effectiveness of the nation's regional HE accreditation bodies. The US Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, had a few words to say about all this in December when she

addressed a meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI).

There is much emphasis on information for students as consumers – reducing the asymmetry of market information – so they can make good decisions. There's an emphasis on accountability and transparency. I have a feeling there's some conflation of distinct ideas happening here, but maybe I'm just old-fashioned about the idea of being a learner as opposed to a customer.

Spellings' address is here:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/12/12182007.html>

10. Student gems

Student gems is a UK web service that allows students to list their skills which businesses can then match to their needs for short term support, advice or project work. The students who are matched get employment exposure in their chosen fields and the CV grows so that when they exit uni they can bid for the jobs they want. It's operated as a private venture as I understand it.

A model to watch. The site is still in beta-test mode:

<http://www.studentgems.com/>

11. Funding for tertiary education in NZ – the brave new world begins

New Zealand's Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) formally approved the new Investment Plans for all of NZ's publicly funded tertiary education institutions. More details are on the TEC website:
<http://www.tec.govt.nz/templates/NewsItem.aspx?id=2701>

The new approach to funding has pricked the interest of many beyond NZ's shores. It's a shift in funding models well worth watching. One outcome of the new arrangements is that they open up the possibility for individual institutions to pursue distinctive missions. That doesn't mean everyone's happy, as two reports in the *New Zealand Herald* indicate. See:
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10481629
and
http://www.nzherald.co.nz/topic/story.cfm?c_id=341&objectid=10482512

QUIZ QUESTION 5.

How many universities were there in New Zealand in 1958?

12. DIUS Simplification Plan

The relatively new UK Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) released in December its *Simplification Plan* which aims to reduce the regulatory burden on, amongst other things, higher education and further education.

The *Plan* includes a simplification grid identifying the issues, how they can be addressed, what the savings will be, and the state of progress. You might find especially interesting the long list of data streams commencing on page 32. The *Plan* is here: http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/20805_Simplification%20plan_v5.pdf

(The Plan also makes reference to the Better Regulation Executive, which is ready to take suggestions on how regulation can be tamed: <http://www.betterregulation.gov.uk/>)

13. The weight of numbers

Numbers are weightless, right? Maybe there is an arcane branch of maths or philosophy or economics that will suggest otherwise.

Whatever the reality, I have to say that the numbers in India's 11th Five Year Plan feel very heavy indeed. The 11th Plan got the nod on 19 December – it covers the period from mid 2007- mid 2012, so a bit of a late start.

India's PM, Manmohan Singh, spoke about it on 3 January at the 95th Indian Science Congress. In his speech he said: 'The Eleventh Five Year Plan is in fact a National Education Plan. ... In nominal terms there is going to be a five-fold increase in spending on education in the 11th plan'.

So to the numbers. In the same speech he said there would be:

- 30 new Central Universities
- 5 new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research
- 8 new Indian Institutes of Technology
- 7 new Indian Institutes of Management
- 20 new Indian Institutes of Information Technology

AAIR e-Newsletter – January 2008

- 1600 new Industrial Training Institutes and Polytechnics
- 10,000 new vocational schools
- 50,000 new Skill Development Centres.

See what I mean. Heavy numbers.

His speech is here:

<http://pmindia.nic.in/lspeech.asp?id=637>

Singh promised that a 'detailed plan for implementing these proposals will be spelt out in the next six months'. So you'll just have to sit tight.

Until then, you might find some pointers in *Towards faster and more inclusive growth: An approach to the 11th Five Year Plan*, which was released by the Indian Planning Commission in January 07. The education bits start on page 57: http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/app11_16jan.pdf

14. Weighty urls

The World Bank has revitalised its web access to educational data. Edstats is worth a quick visit. It would take half a page to quote the full url here, so for pragmatic purposes, try this: [The World Bank's Edstats website](#)

I found the tables on private education expenditure pretty interesting – tables 1.3 and 2.3 at this address which is part of Edstats: [The webpage with links to these tables](#)

QUIZ QUESTION 6.

How many TAFE Institutes are there in Australia?

15. PhD completion project

The PhD completion project, conducted by the US Council of Graduate Schools, has started Phase II, so it's time to catch up. Or in my case, acquaint myself with it for the first time: <http://www.phdcompletion.org/index.asp>

16. Take a course at the UN University

The UN University also has an online learning site. I've registered for one course but really, I just want to explore. I haven't fossicked around yet. Beat me to it: <http://www.onlinelearning.unu.edu/>

17. Take a lecture at Yale

Yale University is now treading the open courseware boards with the launch of Open Yale Courses. I've taken two lectures on modern poetry, but if you aren't into rhymes, or you aren't in poems that don't rhyme, then perhaps astronomy or Old Testament studies will suit.

You get course notes, and you can take a survey when you're all done. Great stuff:
<http://open.yale.edu/courses/index.html>

18. Take a degree at Yale

The cost of education at the elite US universities has been remarked upon for a very long time. Recently it's been remarked upon in the halls of the US Senate.

Testimony to the Senate's Finance Committee on 26 September from Lynne Munson, Adjunct Fellow at the Center for College Affordability & Productivity, pressed the view that the well-endowed universities were dudding the taxpayers:
<http://finance.senate.gov/hearings/testimony/2007test/092607testlm.pdf>

The Senate Finance Committee and the elite unis have been listening to this analysis and the political pressure has built. In early January, Yale (like Harvard late last year) announced it would divert more of its endowment into student financial aid. Here's how Senator Chuck Grassley of the Senate Finance Committee saw Yale's policy change:
<http://www.senate.gov/~finance/press/Cpress/2008/prg010708.pdf>

QUIZ QUESTION 7.

How many private Registered Training Organisations are there in Australia?

19. Higher level VET qualifications

NCVER has issued *Higher-level vocational education and training qualifications: Their importance in today's training market*.

The relationship between the labour market, HE courses and higher level VET qualifications is one that is evolving and likely to be contentious and vigorous over coming years. The awarding of associate degrees, full vocational degrees, the

apparent demand for associate professional training at the Diploma and Advanced Diploma level, the relative cost of HE and VET qualifications both to government and to students through fees – all these play into an interesting debate.

This new NCVER paper opens the lid a fraction:
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr06005.pdf>

QUIZ QUESTION 8.

In 2002, which country had the highest number of passenger cars per 100 people?

20. The incredible disappearing RQF

Yes folks, we seminared it, projected it, planned it and conferenced it to within an inch of its life. And then it died, right before our eyes. Democracy has a price.

So, just for the record, in almost exactly 12 months it happened like this:

- on 18 December 06 Senator Bishop, then Education Minister, announced that \$46m would be available to support RQF groundwork in 2007 and RQF implementation in 2008
- on 7 February 07, Senator Carr, then Shadow Minister with RQF responsibility, told those at a forum (*An investment In Australia's future: Why the mathematical sciences matter*) in Melbourne that it would scrap the RQF
- we soldiered on until the *coup de gras* on 21 December 07, when Senator Carr laid the RQF to rest by press release:
<http://minister.industry.gov.au/SenatortheHonKimCarr/Pages/CANCELLATIONOFRESEARCHQUALITYFRAMEWORKIMPLEMENTATION.aspx>

All eyes now turn to the reincarnation of the British RAE as the REF (Research Excellence Framework).

The Higher Education Funding Council for England released a discussion paper on the REF in November last – may be some clues therein:
http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/HEFCE/2007/07_34/

21. Engineers wanted

It's hard to keep track of the innovative programs designed to attract people into professions suffering from a lack of takers – from accountants to teachers, there are too few qualified people to do the work on offer.

'Background Paper: Skill Shortages and the Engineering Profession' (July 2007) from Engineers Australia overviews engineering skills shortages in Australia, offering international comparisons: http://www.apesma.asn.au/summit/papers/EA_skills_shortages.pdf

The (speculative?) data about retention rates in higher education engineering courses is dispiriting.

The Australian Technology Network (ATN) has launched a couple of initiatives, designed to capture the interest of potential engineers. 'Engineers Make It Happen' is an ATN website that gives chapter and verse on what engineers do, what degrees are on offer in ATN member institutions, what engineers earn: <http://www.engineeringdegrees.com.au/>

The website is one element of a project titled 'Engineering Tomorrow's Engineers', funded in 2006 by the Commonwealth government (to the tune of \$681,415) under the Collaborative and Structural Reform Fund: http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/2F19DCD0-9B06-4CF2-8367-5FC8E112FB39/15971/Casr_2006_funded.pdf

There's more about the ATN's strategies here: <http://www.atn.edu.au/wgroups/engineering.htm>

Maybe these strategies are paying off: see the *Australian Financial Review* story (3 January) on 08 course demand headlined 'Students rush engineering, architecture' (sorry – *AFR* articles are paywalled, so no link).

22. Engineer Initiative

In California, Governor Schwarzenegger has announced the Engineering Initiative, intended to bring an additional 20,000+ engineers into the state's workforce by 2014.

There is more here: <http://gov.ca.gov/index.php?blog/issue/20071226-victoria-bradshaw-text-blog-ca-engineer-initiative/>

... and a little more here: <http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/news/77791.html>

23. Royal Academy of Engineering

This **must** be the place where I quote Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, because it's metaphorically related to engineers: 'What

need the bridge much broader than the flood?' It **must** be the place because I've remembered that line since 1976 and I've never had the chance to use it until now. My therapeutic needs aside ...

The British Royal Academy for Engineering runs the Best Programme – targeted at schools, it includes a career advice component which in part explains the university options for aspiring engineers: <http://www.raengbest.org.uk/>

24. Report of the Australian National University Flexible Learning Working Party

I liked this report because it comes at the issues from a very 'local' (that is, ANU) perspective, and because it's open about attitudes and problems that might get in the way of embracing flexible learning. And it goes right ahead and says we ought to get flexible learning underway in a concerted manner.

The report has some nice passages – a fr'instance or two:

- Good quality educational design is the key to flexible learning.
- At Bowral strategic planning retreat in February 2006, the Vice Chancellor asked provocatively "Why do we still give lectures?" In doing so, he was putting to question some of the fundamental beliefs about education at this university.
- It must be stressed that technology is not synonymous with flexibility, and, poorly used, can constrain rather than make more flexible the student's learning experience.
- Models of support for teaching and learning that are overly centralized tend to be poorly regarded by academics "at the coal face". It is important to be able to provide support that is accessible, relevant, and timely. Crucially, the development of widespread "in-house" expertise in flexible learning practice, within local areas, should be one goal of any central initiative.

I'm unclear about the timing of this report – the text refers to 2006, but the url suggests late 2007. Whatever ... you can download it at: http://info.anu.edu.au/OVC/Committees/040PP_Education/uecmtg1_2007/166flexiblelearningreport_finalnov07.pdf

ANSWERS TO THE NEW YEAR QUIZ

QUESTION 1

In what year were women granted the right to graduate officially at Cambridge University?

Answer: 1948

QUESTION 2

How many undergraduate students were there at Harvard University in the 2006-2007 academic year?

Answer: 6,715

QUESTION 3

How many Australian Commonwealth Ministers of Education have there been since 1968? Name them.

Answer: 18 – in reverse order they are: Gillard, Bishop, Nelson, Kemp, Vanstone, Crean, Beazley Jnr, Dawkins, Ryan, Baume, Fife, Carrick, Guilfoyle, Beazley Snr, Whitlam, Bowen, Fraser, Gorton. (Let me know if I've missed anyone, or got the order out of whack. Worth noting, I think, that 9 of the 18 were (or are) leaders or deputy leaders of the governing or senior opposition parties).

QUESTION 4

In which year were Australian universities first permitted to charge market fees to international students?

Answer: 1985.

QUESTION 5

How many universities were there in New Zealand in 1958?

Answer: One – the University of New Zealand. In 1960 the colleges which constituted the university became separate entities: the universities of Auckland, Canterbury, Otago and Victoria, and the agricultural colleges of Canterbury and Massey.

QUESTION 6

How many TAFE Institutes are there in Australia?

Answer: 72

QUESTION 7

How many private Registered Training Organisations are there in Australia?

Answer: 3,127 (estimated)

QUESTION 8

In 2002, which country had the highest number of passenger cars per 100 people?

Answer: New Zealand – 61.3. Australia is 10th with 49.3.

(You're absolutely right. There is no connection of any kind between these stats and education. Not even a trick question – purely mischievous. The question is: did you get it absolutely right?)