

The Changing Landscape of Higher Education: Constructing Our Future

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The Australian University sector has faced significant change and challenge – how is Higher Education responding to the demands of Government reform? Government policy changes have introduced performance based funding for learning and teaching performance of individual universities, a Research Quality Framework to drive and reward university research, changes to the capacity of Universities to charge fees and the relative changes in government funding of universities. Australian universities have had to respond to increased employer demands and government pressure for increasing diversity, accompanied by increased requirements of quality assurance and attention to academic standards. These requirements are not unique to the Australian sector, similar reforms and expectations are apparent in almost all Higher Education contexts.

How are universities responding to these apparently competing demands? While these changes have influenced the ways that universities do business, they have also had substantial impact on the work of libraries, information technology services and learning and teaching development. In this paper I will examine recent reforms in Australian Higher Education, the effect of these on universities generally, and on specific areas of university business. As we have responded to government imperatives the focus of our work has itself changed. Has this created new opportunities and re-shaped our work in positive ways or has it shifted our attention from core business? As we continue to respond to the reform agenda, and as it continues to develop, what will it mean for the ways in which we see our professions and our role within universities? What might our futures look like and what role can we play in determining them?