



The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) represents the Deans of faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities in universities and higher education institutions across Australia and New Zealand.

DASSH has considerable expertise, knowledge and experience in the higher education sector, both nationally and internationally. DASSH believes it is a major stakeholder in the Higher Education Review (HER) and welcomes it. DASSH is a willing participant and contributor to the Review.

DASSH considers the following as areas of high-level importance for consideration by the Higher Education Review.

1. The role and contribution of ASSH is under recognised by the higher education sector, government, industry and business. This needs to be reversed.
2. Funding, recognition and reward to ASSH need to reflect the contribution of ASSH to the community and take into account its particular brand and style of research, teaching and learning and the uniqueness of its knowledge, skills and expertise.
3. New processes to enable community, government, public service, industry and business to access ASSH research, post-publication, skills and community contributions are needed so that innovation, industry and business is enhanced, public policy is better informed and serviced, local and regional communities are supported.
4. Incentive and reward for second and multiple languages need to be established.
5. The level of regulation and compliance needs to be reduced.
6. The Higher Education Review must link with other Australian Government activity especially the National Innovation System Review, the Excellence in Research for Australia initiative and the national curriculum

Productivity and participation are dependent on a highly skilled workforce. Much of the work that is undertaken by ASSH enables **social inclusion** through the development of graduate attributes that lead to careers in a large range of areas. With the opportunities provided by the disciplines and professions encompassed in ASSH such as languages, creative arts, communication and humanities a workforce is being created which is flexible, internationally focused and able to work with others in culturally and socially appropriate ways.

The current funding regime for science, engineering and health sciences compensates for its need for expensive equipment. ASSH is currently not able to afford its own equipment needs. The demands of digital media, ICT, drama, screen and the associated infrastructure is the same for all disciplines. In many cases, equipment being used for training in education is lagging behind industry standards and expectations – a fact not lost on employers.



Continued underfunding for ASSH has resulted in large classes, loss of seminars and tutorials. This does not take into account the essence of ASSH degrees. This is neither **efficient** nor **effective**.

Added to this is the issue of work integrated learning, field schools and practica which are often not funded at all. The Higher Education Support Act (HESA) means that universities must fund these essential parts of courses. New funding regimes need to account for this. Small classes are often required, such as for visual and performing arts and languages. The current funding scheme results in class sizes that are much larger than desirable for quality outcomes. If **enhanced quality and high standards** are a genuine goal of the higher education system, then adequate funding for infrastructure and class size reduction is essential. In many Arts faculties, tutorials, the core of teaching, have student : staff ratios of are 30:1. This does not enable students to engage in reflection, dialogue, critique and communication.

Many DASSH members are committed to policy-orientated work. They make the effort to engage with government and the public service to provide them with current and relevant research findings, skills and knowledge to translate into policy. There are barriers currently operating. Researches can be encouraged through a rewards system or endeavours that broker post-publication discussion, contact, collaboration and communication with potential user groups such as public policy developers. Government could provide support as a broker and facilitator for this kind of engagement.

The ASSH sector encompasses second and multiple language skills. These enhance cultural understanding and openness to different ways of thinking. This is a necessary ingredient for innovation to occur. Greater encouragement of and support to the languages will enhance Australia's capacity for **high performing institutions with a global focus**. A national curriculum that enables student engagement with languages is needed to underpin increased numbers studying languages at university.

The major barrier to achieving much that is possible and desirable is the overwhelming bureaucracy. Many examples can be provided to support the idea that the higher education sector is the most over-managed sector in Australia. This tends to produce compliance rather than creativity, reaction rather than pro-activity, and similarity rather than diversity.

DASSH notes other areas of current activity by the Australian Government namely the National Innovation System Review, the Excellence in Research for Australia and the work being done on the national curriculum. Each of these will have an impact on the other. It is necessary for these areas to communicate and collaborate and together to build the components and the foundations for a national innovation system.

The DASSH welcome the opportunity for further consultation and input. Please contact:

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