AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF THE HUMANITIES
LEARNED ACADEMIES SPECIAL PROJECT

Future Humanities Workforce

Consultation Paper

www.humanities.org.au

AN AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF THE HUMANITIES LEARNED ACADEMIES SPECIAL PROJECT (LASP) FUNDED BY THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL

Australian Government
Australian Research Council

The Future Humanities Workforce Project is funded through the Australian Research Council's Learned Academies Special Projects Scheme, which invests in the future of Australian research by providing funds to support strategic disciplinary initiatives.

Contents

1 Introduction 4

1.1 A note on terms and definitions 4

1.2 Who should respond to the consultation paper 5

1.3 How to respond 5

1.4 What we will do with the responses 5

2 Future Knowledge, Skills and Capabilities 6

Questions 7

3 Early Career Researchers 8

Questions 9

4 Workforce Diversity and Gender Equity 10

Questions 11

5 References 12

6 Response form 13

Contact details 13

Consultation questions 14

1 Introduction

With our ***Future Humanities Workforce*** project, the Australian Academy of the Humanities will investigate the contribution and preparedness of Australia's humanities research workforce for the future of work in academia and beyond.

Australia's humanities sector makes a vital contribution to the prosperity of our nation. Humanities graduates comprise a major part of Australia's workforce, and our higher education and research ecosystem.

Among the industries that are both critical to the Australian economy and in which we are regarded as a global leader, three – tourism, international education, and finance – are industries for which humanities together with the arts and social sciences (HASS) provide core knowledge and training. Other major areas of growth, such as entertainment and professional services industries, are also destination industries for humanities graduates (Business Council of Australia, 2014).

Research and training in humanities disciplines builds capacity to articulate social and cultural understanding, enables effective international engagement, and contributes to economic productivity and innovation. To secure these outcomes into the future, we need to be sure of the ongoing capacity of these disciplines.

This project focuses on the **humanities research workforce**, which refers to the university-based academic workforce, along with the wider postgraduate-trained workforce.

This cohort plays a key role in preserving and advancing deep disciplinary knowledge in the humanities; in creating opportunities for knowledge exchange between academia, government and industry; and in training future generations of humanities graduates for working in Australia's largest and most productive industries.

In seeking to future-proof this workforce, the project asks:

Are we providing viable pathways for future humanities academics? Are our programs equipping the next generation of post-graduate trained researchers with the necessary skills and knowledge to work within and beyond academia, and to train future generations? Is our humanities research workforce diverse enough to cater for the future needs of our political, legal, economic and educational sectors?

In this project, we take up three inter-related topics concerning the humanities research workforce:

- support for humanities early career researchers (ECRs);
- future knowledge, skills and capabilities for a productive humanities workforce; and
- diversity and gender equity.

This consultation paper is designed to identify key issues, data sources, policy opportunities and practical solutions relevant to future-proofing Australia's humanities research workforce.

1.1 A note on terms and definitions

In this consultation paper, 'humanities' refers to the fields of study and research that investigate human cultures, values and beliefs. This generally includes studies in the creative arts and writing; language, communication and culture; history and archaeology; and philosophy and religious studies. For other terms used in this paper, please refer to the Glossary in the accompanying Literature Review.

1.2 Who should respond to the consultation paper

We are seeking input from the higher education sector, humanities researchers, teachers and graduates, professional associations, government policymakers, industry, and not-for-profit organisations. We want to engage with stakeholders across all sectors in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of issues associated with the future humanities research workforce, including the current capability and demographics of this workforce, and the skills and knowledge this workforce will require.

1.3 How to respond

Submissions can be made by using our online form, or directly via email. Please include concrete examples wherever possible, and references as appropriate. Submissions should not exceed 3,000 words, excluding supporting evidence. You should answer those questions in which you have an interest and not feel obliged to answer them all.

Submissions are due by **Friday 31 May 2019**.

1.4 What we will do with the responses

We intend to publish all submissions on our website, and include the names of individuals and organisations who contribute to the project in our final report. If you would like to make a confidential submission, please indicate this on the submission form, or in your email.

2 Future Knowledge, Skills and Capabilities

Questions relating to the future of Australia's humanities workforce intersect with a larger debate on the future of work generally. A key topic of discussion in this debate revolves around the skills and capabilities humanities researchers (and graduates more broadly) will require to successfully navigate the labour market of tomorrow. With respect to the humanities research workforce, this encapsulates both those who will build their careers in academia, along with those who will transition beyond the academic sector.

Skills can be broadly defined as 'the abilities embedded in individuals as they relate to completing tasks in the workforce' (Cunningham et al, 2016, p. 18).

The capabilities generated through humanities training are the foundation of a competent and agile workforce. These include, for example, the ability to:

- engage with, analyse and synthesise evidence from an array of different sources;
- design research projects and plans for locating, retrieving and storing information;
- present a coherent argument in both written and oral form;
- work with others by using negotiation and diplomacy, including drawing upon knowledge of foreign languages and cultures;
- deliver content that is purpose- and audience-appropriate;
- appreciate multiple points of view; and
- solve problems by using critical and lateral thinking.

These capabilities also allow humanities graduates and researchers to transition across different professional contexts. By drawing upon wide skill sets, historians work as journalists, political commentators, or researchers for government or NGOs; literature majors consult for professional services firms, or work as subject matter experts within education software companies; philosophers work on questions arising out of growth in the artificial intelligence and health science industries.

Research into the future of work indicates that demand for higher-order cognitive skills that support intellectual agility and professional mobility will continue to increase (e. g. World Economic Forum, 2016; Healy, Nicholson and Gahan, 2017; British Academy, 2017). These in-demand attributes directly correspond to the skills and capabilities developed through studying the humanities, underscoring the critical role of this training in the future.

Recent studies of higher degree by research (HDR) courses and PhD employment outcomes in Australia and abroad flag the common perception that PhD graduates (whether from STEM or HASS disciplines) are not 'work ready,' and that they lack 'enterprise skills.' This view, however, does not align with the growing body of research showing that humanities graduates and researchers are equipped with skills that are highly sought-after in an array of different professional contexts, and will continue to be relevant into the future (e. g. Molla and Cuthbert, 2015; British Academy, 2017; Deloitte, 2018).

The question of how to address the current misalignment between perception and reality in how humanities skills relate to employer requirements across academic and other sectors is therefore fundamental to any effort to move beyond common biases associated with the employability of humanities graduates and researchers.

There is also an urgent need to better understand the knowledge, skills, and capabilities humanities researchers need in order to transition between academia and other sectors with greater ease. While postgraduate training may have traditionally been a pathway towards academic employment, there is today increasing consensus that most research-trained graduates will work outside academia (Group of Eight, 2013, pp. 24-26). How then will Australia ensure the right balance in PhD training between what is required for developing comprehensive specialist knowledge, and the generalist skills that are fundamental for transitioning between different professional contexts?

Literature on the future of work makes it clear that new technologies will change what, where and how we do the things that we do. It is therefore critical to understand what future skills and capabilities humanities researchers will require to prosper within this evolving work environment. The issue of digital literacy is frequently raised across a variety of research and teaching contexts, triggering questions about how technology can (and will) be integrated into teaching practices, scholarly discourses, investigative methods and research dissemination.

An important element of this debate is what humanities disciplines themselves will look like in the future. With the move towards greater interdisciplinarity in research, the scope of humanistic inquiry has changed significantly over the past several decades, with 'hybrid configurations of discourses that happen around, beneath, below, between the disciplines' continually opening new areas of study (Braidotti, 2018).

This accelerating trend towards greater inter- and trans-disciplinary collaboration across the humanities, arts, social sciences and the hard and natural sciences requires a workforce with capacity to navigate and critically engage with this dynamic research environment.

Questions

1. What are humanities researchers' (and humanities graduates' more broadly) most distinctive and important skills and capabilities?
2. What are the current skills and capability gaps?
    a. In the academic workforce?
    b. In the wider workforce?
3. Which skills and capabilities are most valued and where are they used?
    a. In the academic workforce?
    b. In the wider workforce?
4. What are future knowledge, skills, and capabilities that humanities researchers will require?
5. What can the humanities contribute to the data and digital literacy agenda over the next decade?

3 Early Career Researchers

Debate over the future of the humanities academic workforce is frequently focused on the prospects of early career researchers (ECRs) and their ability to replenish disciplinary ranks.

Studies have highlighted an ageing workforce (with almost half of all humanities, arts, and social sciences fields having more than 50 per cent of their staff over the age of 50), and an impending shortage of senior staff available to take on planning, administration, leadership and mentorship roles (Turner and Brass, 2014). The question of succession planning thus presents a major challenge for the future of all humanities disciplines.

It is difficult to quantify the ECR population. Though the standard definition for an ECR is 5-7 years post-PhD, there is a wide range of experiences within this category. Some ECRs will find themselves at the start of the academic career ladder; others will be un- or under-employed, with many in professional rather than academic appointments. Estimates based on Australian Research Council data from the Excellence in Research for Australia report for 2015 shows that, in humanities and creative arts fields, over 40 percent of appointments are at either Level A (8 per cent – 565 FTE) or Level B (34 per cent – 2339 FTE).

Increased rates of casualisation and uncertainty over teaching and research careers means that there is a real danger that academic talent will be lost to other sectors, leaving a smaller pool of prospective entrants available to continue the work of the profession (Bazeley, 2003; Turner and Brass, 2014). A recent Parliamentary inquiry highlighted that Australia's National Competitive Grants Program, which places greater emphasis in the evaluation process on researcher track record rather than on the originality and contribution of proposed projects, can also adversely affect ECR prospects in academia (Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 2018).

The productivity of junior scholars is often hampered by the precarious nature of their employment, with many struggling to achieve the level of research output required to secure competitive funding (and therefore any prospect of ongoing academic employment). The future of the sector greatly depends on strategies for supporting researchers at the early stage of their careers, and providing pathways for progression into academic careers and beyond. (Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 2018).

A recent UK report outlined some of the key challenges faced by arts and humanities researchers at the immediate completion of their doctoral studies (Renfrew and Green, 2014), including:

- the prevalence of fixed-term contracts and the associated adverse effect on career progress;
- the rise of 'portfolio work' (which is a common euphemism for precarious employment), where ECRs hold multiple simultaneous part-time roles;
- not being recognised as a researcher owing to the type of role being performed (for example in administrative or teaching-only positions), and as a result missing out on opportunities made available for researchers;
- a prevailing sense of lack of professional choice, and the compulsion to accept unfavourable contracts in order to remain within the higher education sector; and

- concerns over the difficulty of transitioning into other sectors.

We do not currently possess a comprehensive understanding of the experience of arts and humanities researchers in Australia. A recent report pertaining to their STEM field peers (and specifically women in STEM research) demonstrates, however, that many of the challenges foregrounded in the UK report are common to Australia (Bell and Yates, 2015).

International efforts aimed at ensuring that research careers remain attractive into the future provide some important lessons.

In 2005, the European Commission adopted a European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers as a first step towards creating a framework for improving and consolidating career prospects for researchers. The Charter and Code together outline general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and research funders to ensure transparent recruitment and career development opportunities for researchers, irrespective of contract length.

A similar initiative was launched in the UK in 2008 with the establishment of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. In 2018, the Concordat underwent an independent review, which looked at the impact the agreement has had, as well as challenges associated with its implementation and areas for further improvement.

Within the Australian context, there is a need to understand what strategies might best support ECRs on their pathway into the academic labour market. Equally, greater understanding of the best ways to support researchers who will most likely transition in and out of academia over the course of their professional careers is needed.

Alongside these questions, the lack of longitudinal data on PhD career pathways is a uniform impediment identified in all reports on this topic. Detailed information on career pathways for graduates and researchers is critical for providing more tailored support for ECRs.

Questions

6. What are the best practice models for supporting ECRs?
7. Do ECRs in the humanities experience different or additional challenges compared to their peers in other disciplines?
8. Do ECRs experience different or additional challenges compared to mid-career or senior staff?
9. What do ECRs see as challenges in their career progression?
10. How do we better track the career trajectories of ECRs?

4 Workforce Diversity and Gender Equity

Workforce diversity and gender equity are fundamental to the development of the future humanities workforce.

The Diversity Council of Australia broadly describes inclusiveness as a situation in which people of different ages, cultural and religious backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations and physical and mental abilities feel valued and respected, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their organisations. Commitment to the principles of inclusion and equity will be instrumental in ensuring the ongoing vitality of humanities disciplines, and expanding the disciplinary range of humanistic scholarship so that it adequately reflects and draws upon the full complexity of Australian society (Diversity Council Australia, n. d.).

Recent reports provide some insight into the challenge of achieving diversity and gender equity in the humanities. Though limited to specific institutional and national contexts, these studies provide strong evidence that women and members of minority groups are more likely to be affected by the cumulative burden of additional service, and to be exposed to subtle or overt discrimination, systematic exclusion from circles of power, and harassment (Royal Historical Society 2018a; Royal Historical Society 2018b; Columbia University, 2018).

These studies also show that the imbalance across the academic workforce is triggered at the earliest stages of the educational pipeline. The lack of diversity within course syllabus in humanities subjects, for example, prevents engagement of wide range of students in certain disciplines, which in turn reduces the number of enrolments in these subjects at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Dodds and Goddard, 2013; Royal Historical Society, 2018a)

Reports from the UK also highlight the fact that precarious ECR employment disproportionately affects scholars from minority backgrounds, which further undermines diversity within an already restricted pipeline of research labour (Royal Historical Society, 2018a, p. 62).

An Australian review of educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gives a sense of the relatively slow progress that has been made toward achieving parity in higher education (Behrendt et al, 2012). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be severely underrepresented across the Australian higher education sector, making up just 1.4 per cent of all university enrolments in 2010 – a figure well below the 2006 parity figure of 2.2 per cent. Participation in postgraduate research programs is also comparatively low, with Indigenous students comprising 1.1 per cent of HDR students at university and 0.8 per cent of all HDR completions in 2010. The academic staff profile exhibits a similar bias, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people making up just 0.8 per cent of the academic workforce in 2010 (Berendt et al, 2012, pp. 6-10).

Gender equity in academia has been monitored in Australia since the 1980s (Winchester and Browning, 2015). In the mid-1980s, women comprised 20 per cent of academic staff and held 6 per cent of senior positions (positions above ‘senior lecturer’). Since the 1990s, many Australian universities have developed policies to increase the representation of women in academia.

According to one study, these initiatives have been largely effective, with women comprising 44 per cent of academic staff and holding 31 per cent of senior positions in academia in 2014 (Winchester and Browning, 2015). Equally, and notwithstanding this significant positive

impact, measures of the participation by women in academia continue to call attention to a number of negative trends, with the pace of the progress remaining a cause for concern.

While women account for a large number of doctoral completions in Australia, this outcome has not brought a meaningful change to gendered patterns of academic staffing (e. g. Dodds and Goddard, 2013; Winchester and Browning, 2015; Bell and Yates, 2015). Reports have found that there is a 'tipping point' following the completion of a PhD, where women enter the type of positions that defer or deny them a clear research career trajectory. Female ECRs largely work in teaching, advising or mentoring students, while male ECRs work to a greater extent in undertaking research, and managing or supervising others. Gender is also significantly associated with differences in annual earnings, with female academics generally on inferior terms with respect to earnings, employment conditions, and appointment levels (Winchester and Browning, 2015, pp. 275-276). This situation generates the so-called 'leaky pipe,' which sees fewer women advance to senior positions.

While progress is being made, it is important to highlight findings from a recent UK report that, at the current pace of change, gender parity among the professoriate will not be attained until around 2050 (Royal Historical Society, 2018b). A similar sense of slow progress toward workforce equity more broadly can also be gleaned from a 2018 report on higher education in Australia (Norton and Cherastidtham, 2018), which revealed that female graduates are today expected to earn 27 per cent less than their male counterparts over their careers, which is an improvement of only three per cent over the past ten years.

In Australia, efforts to advance gender equity in academia have been recently co-ordinated through participation in an Australian version of the UK's Athena SWAN Charter Initiative. Established in 2005 in the UK to encourage and recognise the commitment to advancing the careers of women in STEM employment in the UK higher education and research sector, in 2015 the Athena SWAN Charter was expanded to include staff and students working in the arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law sectors (Advance HE's Athena SWAN Charter).

Across Australia, 40 institutions are currently participating in the Athena SWAN pilot program, which is part of the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) initiative of the Australian Academy of Sciences in partnership with the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering. There is an opportunity to consider expanding the program into HASS fields, modelled on the UK experience – especially in light of preliminary findings which suggest that the overall problem of gender asymmetry in the humanities academic workforce is similar to that which has been observed across the STEM sector.

Questions

11. What are the most pressing inequities in the humanities workforce today?
12. What initiatives are most effective in addressing inequity?
13. What are the challenges to achieving a more inclusive agenda?
14. Could initiatives within the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, such as the Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charters, serve as useful models for the humanities sector?

5 References

Bazeley P., 'Defining "Early Career" in Research,' ***Higher Education*** 45, no. 3 (2003), pp. 257-279

Behrendt L. et al., ***Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Final Report***, 2012

Bell S. and Yates L. (with assistance from May R. and Nguyen, ***Women in the Science Research Workforce: Identifying and Sustaining the Diversity Advantage***, Melbourne: L. H. Martin Institute, 2015

British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences**,** ***The Right Skills: Celebrating Skills in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences***, 2017

Braidotti R., 'What is the Human in the Humanities Today?' The Future Lecture Series, School of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, 20 September 2018

Business Council of Australia., ***Building*** *Australia's Comparative Advantages*, 2014

Columbia University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, ***Policy and Planning Committee Equity Reports***, 2018

Cunningham S. et al., ***Skills and capabilities for Australian enterprise innovation***, Melbourne: Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2016

Deloitte Access Economics, Macquarie University, ***The Value of the Humanities***, 2018

Diversity Council Australia, Inclusion, n. d.

Dodds S. and Goddard E., 'Not Just a Pipeline Problem: Improving Women's Participation in Philosophy in Australia,' in Fiona Jenkins and Katrina Hutchison eds., ***Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change?***, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 143-164

Group of Eight, ***The Changing PhD***, Discussion Paper, 2013

Healy J., Nicholson D., and Gahan P., ***The Future of Work in Australia: Anticipating how new technologies will reshape labour markets, occupations and skills requirements***, NSW Dept of Education, 2017

Molla T. and Cuthbert D., 'The Issue of Research Graduate Employability in Australia: An Analysis of the Policy Framing (1999-2013),' ***Australian Educational Researcher*** 42, no. 2 (2015), pp. 237-256

Norton A. and Cherastidtham I., ***Mapping Australian higher education 2018***, Grattan Institute Report No. 2018-11, 2018

Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, Australian Government Funding Arrangement for non-NHMRC Research, 2018

Renfrew K. and Green H., ***Support for Arts and Humanities Researchers Post-PhD***, British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2014

Royal Historical Society, ***Race, Ethnicity and Equality in UK History: A Report and Resource for Change***, 2018a

Royal Historical Society, ***Promoting Gender Equality in UK History: A Second Report and Recommendations for Good Practice***, 2018b

Turner G. and Brass K., ***Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia***, Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 2014

Winchester H. P. M. and Browning L., 'Gender equality in academia: a critical reflection,' ***Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*** 37, no. 3 (2015), pp. 269-281

World Economic Forum, ***The Future of Jobs, Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution***, 2016

6 Response form

To inform the Future Humanities Workforce project, the Australian Academy of the Humanities wishes to establish an evidence base about the challenges and opportunities facing Australia's humanities-trained workforce and its contribution to a range of industry sectors.

We intend to publish all submissions on our website and include the names of individuals and organisations who contribute to the project in our final report. If you would like to make a confidential submission, please indicate this on the submission form, or in your email.

Contact details

Please state whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation:

Individual/organisation

Please also give your name and, if appropriate, the name of your organisation and contact details (telephone and email):

Name:

Name of organisation:

Telephone no.:

Email:

Do you consent to have your submission published on the Academy's website?

Yes/No

Further consultation

The Academy will be undertaking further consultations as part of this project. Would you be interested in participating in the project focus groups?

Yes/No

We are particularly interested in hearing from early career researchers (ECRs). Do you identify as an ECR, and would you be prepared to be involved in a follow-up consultation?

Yes/No

Consultation questions

Please include supporting evidence and concrete examples wherever possible, and references as appropriate. Submissions should not exceed 3,000 words, excluding supporting evidence. You should answer those questions in which you have an interest and not feel obliged to answer them all.

Submissions are due by **Friday 31 May 2019** by:

- Completing the online consultation form, or
- Email enquiries@humanities.org.au, or
- Postal address:

  The Australian Academy of the Humanities
  Future Humanities Workforce consultation
  GPO Box 93
  Canberra ACT 2601

For further information, please contact Dr Iva Glisic via enquiries@humanities.org.au

List of consultation questions:

1. What are humanities researchers' (and humanities graduates' more broadly) most distinctive and important skills and capabilities?
2. What are the current skills and capability gaps?
    a. In the academic workforce?
    b. In the wider workforce?
3. Which skills and capabilities are most valued and where are they used?
    a. In the academic workforce?
    b. In the wider workforce?
4. What are future knowledge, skills, and capabilities that humanities researchers will require?
5. What can the humanities contribute to the data and digital literacy agenda over the next decade?
6. What are the best practice models for supporting early career researchers (ECRs)?
7. Do ECRs in the humanities experience different or additional challenges compared to their peers in other disciplines?
8. Do ECRs experience different or additional challenges compared to mid-career or senior staff?
9. What do ECRs see as challenges in their career progression?
10. How do we better track the career trajectories of ECRs?
11. What are the most pressing inequities in the humanities workforce today?
12. What initiatives are most effective in addressing inequity?
13. What are the challenges to achieving a more inclusive agenda?
14. Could initiatives within the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, such as the Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charters, serve as useful models for the humanities sector?