

The Job-ready Graduates Package failed in its purpose

The number of teachers and nurses in the system decreased after the JRG was introduced:

- 26,676 students commenced teacher training in 2019; down to 25,467 in 2022.[1]
- 26,493 students commenced training in nursing in 2019, down to 24,177 in 2022.[2]

Students who can least afford it are hardest hit by the JRG

Based on 2022 data, nearly 65,000 students from equity groups studied Society and Culture courses, most of them worse off because of JRG[3]:

- 4,800 Indigenous students
- 29,400 low-SES students
- 29,300 regional students

The number of low SES students commencing higher education decreased after the introduction of the JRG, from 17.1 per cent in 2021 to 16.9 per cent in 2022.[4]

Students are turning away from their preferred courses

- The JRG is driving students away from the study of history, philosophy, media, and culture at university.
 - data analysis by economists Yong, Coelli and Kabatek, which looked at NSW, found a 7.3% decrease in applications for history and philosophy after the introduction of the JRG, over and above the declining trend line from 2014 to 2022.[5]
 - the study also shows that women were more price-responsive than men.

If the Government wants to increase participation, why is it deliberately driving students away from courses that provide 21st century skills?

[1] [Australian Teacher Workforce Data, Initial Teach Education Key Metrics, 12 December 2024 release, downloaded 13/03/2025, ATWD Key Metrics](#)

[2] [Australian Nursery and Midwifery Federation graduate Data Set, June 2024, *anmf_graduate_data_set_june_2024.pdf*, p. 19.](#)

[3] JRG raised student contributions in all Society and Culture courses except Languages, English Literature and Psychology. Courses such as History, Philosophy, and Media Studies more than doubled in price, Australian Academy of the Humanities, [Submission on the Universities Accord \(Student Support and Other Measures\) Bill 2024](#), p. 2.

[4] Department of Education (2024), [Key findings from selected higher education statistics, 2022](#), p. 7.

[5] Maxwell Yong, Michael Coelli, Jan Kabatek (2023), 'University fees, subsidies and field of study', [Working Paper No.11/23](#) September 2023, University of Melbourne, p. 25; for the gender result, see p. 23.

Humanities undergraduates are thriving in the 21st century workforce

Humanities degrees prepare Australian students to contribute to a new world of work.

As automation replaces routine cognitive work, humanities graduates stand to make contributions in roles that require human skills.

Current data indicates humanities graduates earn better wages than the average graduate, and by an increasing margin.[1]

Humanities degrees (including history, literature, languages, philosophy, arts) are essential to **backing Australian thinking**.

These degrees:

- refine critical thinking and analytic skills, and the ability to evaluate arguments, evidence and perspectives.
- stimulate cognitive development and hone creative thinking skills, generating original and innovative solutions to problems and challenges.

Humanities students are:

- more likely to complete their courses.[2]
- more likely than medical, biological, and other science graduates to be employed within six months of completion, and to remain employed.[3]
- relative to their graduate peers, have higher average work satisfaction.[4]

The Job-ready package hurts humanities students. The JRG increased student contributions in history studies [and philosophy, communications, journalism, media, curatorship, politics, sociology] by 117% (from \$6,684 to \$14,500 in 2021, now \$16,992)[5].

The cost of some degrees has blown out to \$50,000.[6]

Australian students, studying the degrees that will equip them to contribute to the 21st century workforce, are being saddled with life-changing debt.

[1] HASS earnings exceeded the graduate average as of 2023, and we expect this trend to continue. *The Guardian*, 14 April 2024. 'The latest graduate outcomes survey reported the largest increase in employment rates in the field of humanities (up from 81.7% in 2021 to 86.6% in 2022). Median graduate salaries in the humanities also jumped, sitting at \$66,700 compared with sciences and mathematics at \$66,000 and business and management \$65,000.'

[2] While we're not aware of empirical work testing this assumption, it is often taken for granted by analysts of higher education; see, for example, <https://theconversation.com/our-research-shows-how-students-can-miss-out-on-their-preferred-uni-degree-but-theres-a-simple-fix-207415>

[3] See the 2023 Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal. Separately (and earlier), the Office of the Chief Scientist for analysis of the STEM workforce showed that in 2016, the unemployment rate for people with university STEM qualifications (5.7%) was higher than the unemployment rate for people with university non-STEM qualifications (3.8%), 2020

Australia's STEM Workforce Report | Chief Scientist, p. 44.

[4] Deloitte Access Economics (2018), *The Value of the Humanities*, Macquarie University, pp. 40–42.

[5] Maxwell Yong, Michael Coelli, Jan Kabotek (2023), p. 7.

*'Why do arts students pay more than medical students?', Tom Mollroy, *Australian Financial Review*, 12 November 2024.