

# TRANSFORMING THE HIGHER EDUCATION WORKFORCE

Analysing progress in Australian  
university workplace reform  
since early 2016

FEBRUARY 2020



Report prepared by PwC Australia



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This report analyses workplace reform undertaken by Australian universities in the four years since the release of the 2016 [\*Australian Higher Education Workforce of the Future Report\*](#) commissioned by AHEIA and produced by PwC.

The 2016 report identified a need for universities to build a workforce that is agile, flexible, professional and specialised, in order to successfully respond to and navigate external environment factors. In doing so, the report focused on three primary workforce dimensions: workforce capability, workforce structure and workforce engagement:

**Workforce capability** refers to the skills, experience and behaviours required of university leaders and the workforce to deliver on strategic workforce objectives.

**Workforce structure** refers to the design of new and existing roles to better meet the requirements of the university.

**Workforce engagement** refers to the way the university engages and manages staff through the employment life-cycle to align to changes in workforce capability and workforce structure.

The five most significant environmental factors that were considered likely to impact Australian universities in the following 10 to 15 years are set out in Table 1.



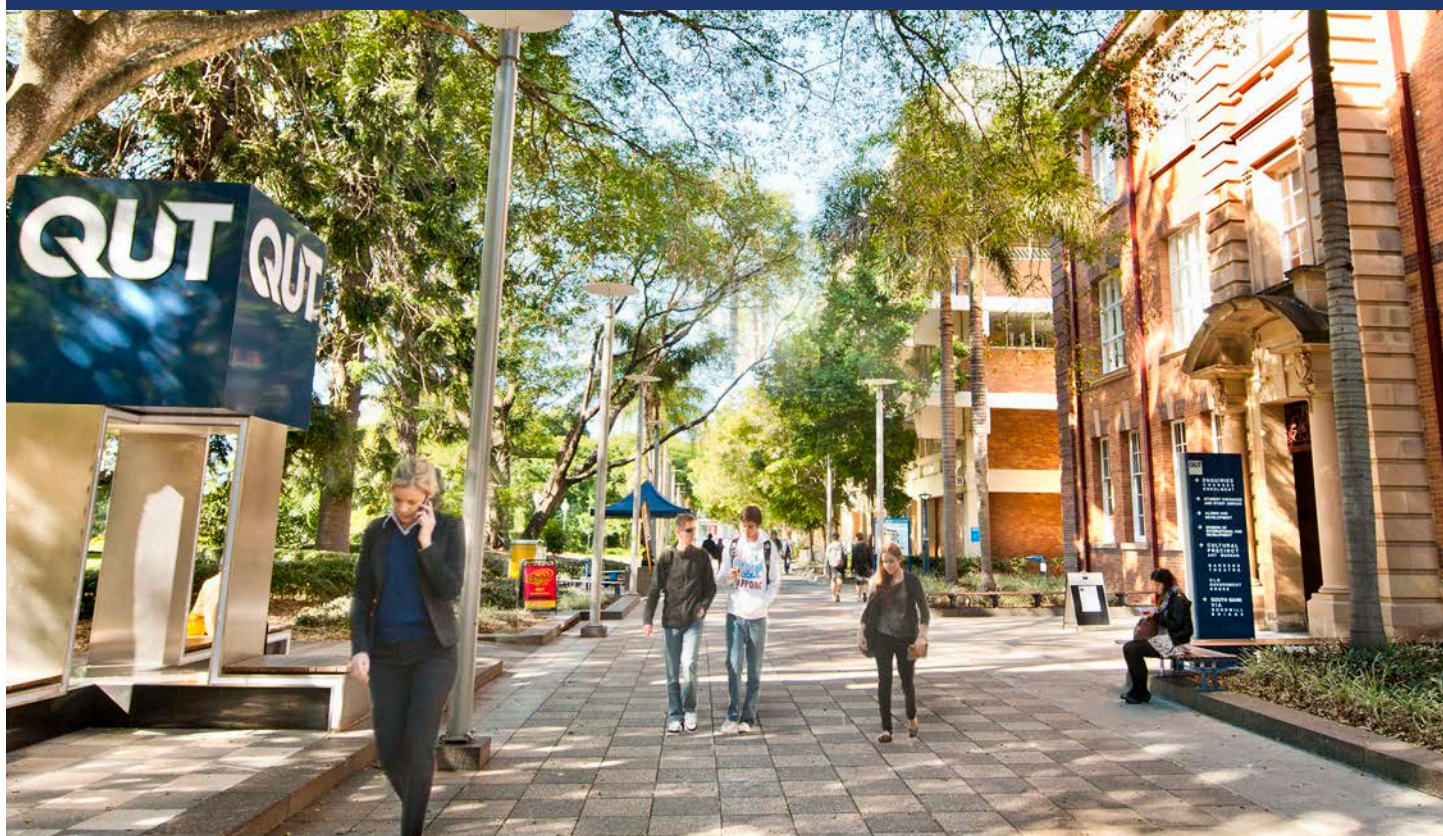


Table 1: 2016 summary of environmental factors affecting Australian universities

Environmental factor	Description
<b>Industry expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing expectations of graduates being “work ready” and proficient in transferable skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, emotional intelligence and digital literacy.</li> <li>Greater need for collaboration between industry and higher education on research initiatives to open new opportunities for research funding, particularly as funding for research continues to change and tighten over time.</li> </ul>
<b>Technology</b>	Technological change will continue to have a profound impact on many facets of the university including professional services, engagement of students, digitisation of curriculum design, delivery and research.
<b>Competition</b>	<p>Increased competition on both a domestic and international scale from global universities, non-university higher education providers (NUHEPs) and other non-traditional private sector providers for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student enrolments</li> <li>Academic and professional talent</li> <li>Research funding</li> </ul>
<b>Student expectations</b>	Changing student expectations as students expect an increasingly customer-focused service, with convenient on-demand offerings that suit their diverse needs.
<b>Policy and funding</b>	Slow funding growth, creating uncertainty as to how universities will be funded in the future.

This report stems from a survey undertaken in December 2019 to identify:

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>(i) major advances made by universities in the primary workforce dimensions outlined on page 4, or otherwise;</p> | <p>(ii) structural and other obstacles standing in the way of universities achieving their strategic workforce objectives; and</p> | <p>(iii) key learnings, both positive and negative, from the journey being undertaken to have a workforce optimally equipped to meet universities’ current and future needs.</p> |
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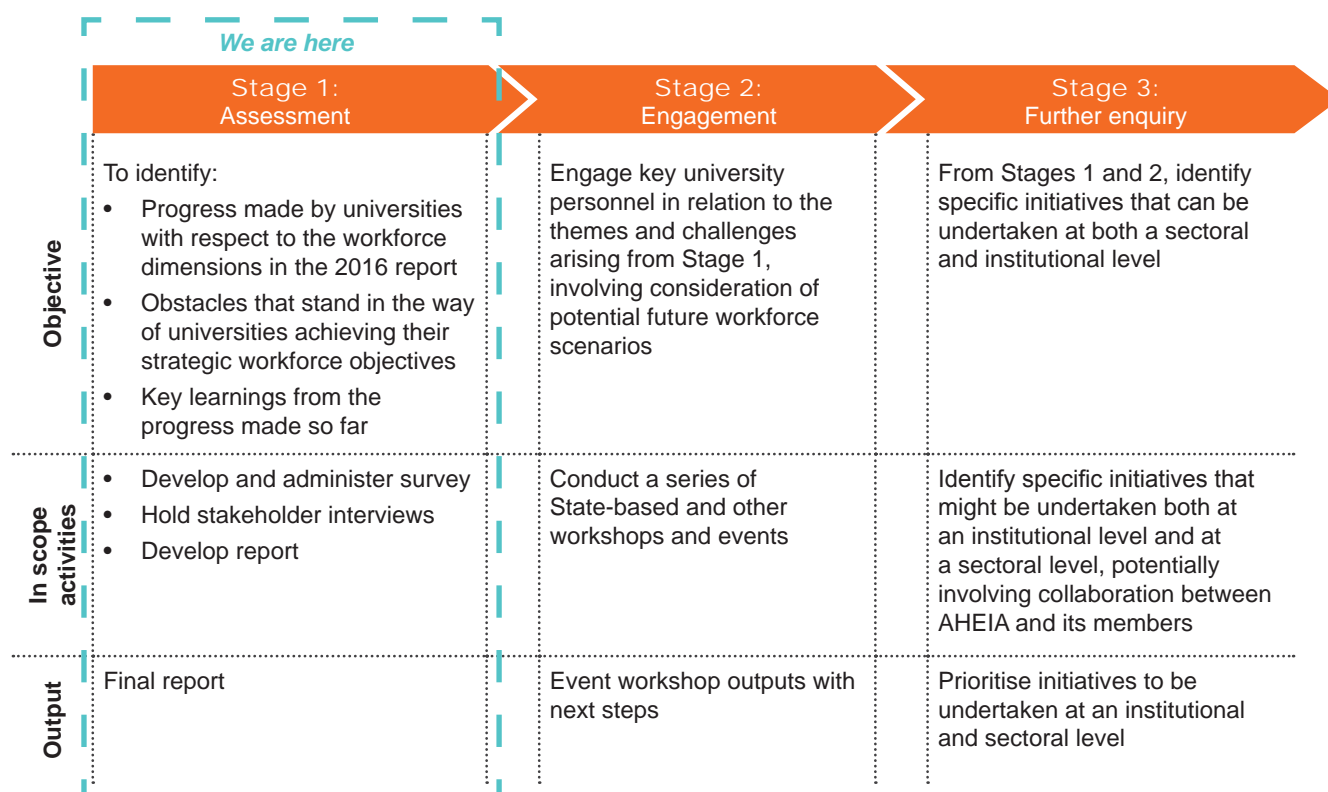
## 2. TRANSFORMING THE HIGHER EDUCATION WORKFORCE PROJECT

AHEIA is undertaking the *Transforming the Higher Education Workforce* project with the following key objectives:

- to identify and promote major gains and achievements/innovations across the sector
- to understand the structural constraints and other barriers that remain and need to be overcome
- to assist universities to identify and navigate the best path forward having regard to their own wider strategic priorities and potential opportunities for sectoral collaboration

Figure 1 outlines the three stages of the project.

Figure 1: *Transforming the Higher Education Workforce* project





Stage 1 of the of the project involved three key activities:

1.

Development, distribution and analysis of the *Transforming the Higher Education Workforce* survey. The survey comprised both quantitative and qualitative questions and aimed to measure progress against the workforce dimensions set out in the 2016 report. Refer to Appendix 1 for the survey questions.
2.

Stakeholder interviews with eight universities to explore workforce transformation initiatives completed in the past four years. See Table 2 for a list of universities interviewed.
3.

Preparation of this report, outlining progress made in workforce transformation across the sector over the past four years.

The survey was distributed to key university personnel (Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Human Resource Directors) of AHEIA's 32 member universities, with each university being asked to provide a single survey response. A total of 29 responses were received.

Table 2: Universities interviewed during engagement

University
Australian Catholic University
La Trobe University
Queensland University of Technology
University of Adelaide
University of Canberra
University of Newcastle
University of Technology Sydney
Victoria University



# 3. KEY FINDINGS

The following sections of the report highlight the key findings from quantitative and qualitative data collected in the *Transforming the Higher Education Workforce* survey. The intent of the survey was to understand progress made in respect to workforce reform across the sector to gain insight into what's working as universities adapt and develop new operating and employment models.

Key findings are outlined in the following areas:<sup>1</sup>

1. Cultural shift towards embracing change
2. Workforce transformation projects and initiatives
3. Obstacles to workforce transformation
4. Workforce capability
5. Workforce structure
6. Workforce engagement

Case studies arising from the interviews undertaken with individual universities are included to showcase workforce transformation initiatives that have been undertaken by universities in the past four years.



<sup>1</sup>Data reported in percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.





## 3.1 CULTURAL SHIFT TOWARDS EMBRACING CHANGE

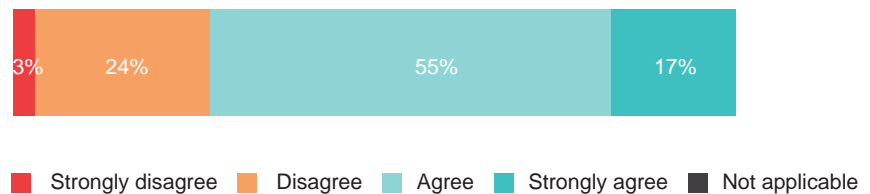
### What sort of shift have we seen?

The higher education sector has historically faced challenges with implementing positive and sustainable change, in part due to a change resistant workforce culture. However, 72% of universities surveyed agree that in the past four years their workforce has taken a positive shift towards embracing change (Figure 2). As a result of the sheer volume of transformation and change initiatives, change is the “new normal” for universities and they are becoming better equipped to navigate their workforce through this change. Whilst the sceptical nature of the university workforce can be an inhibitor of effecting change, it is interesting that one university stated that although this can slow the pace of change, it can also be used to positively drive and champion change if stakeholders are engaged early via a layered and collaborative approach to address risks and concerns.

### How has the shift been achieved?

Universities are using a variety of approaches to shift the workforce culture towards embracing and championing change:

Figure 2: Extent of agreement that university workforces have positively shifted towards embracing change



#### Increased focus on staff engagement and effective communications

In the face of constant change and disruption, many universities are proactively improving their workplace communications. This has included a focus on engaging affected staff early, providing transparency as to why change is needed, and utilising innovative engagement techniques to gain commitment and buy-in.

#### Establishment of change management functions and methodologies

Investing in internal change management capability and capacity is a priority for many universities. Universities are reviewing how they are set up to deliver change effectively and consistently, leading to the establishment of Centres of Excellence (CoEs) that can help build an overarching change framework or methodology, as well as supporting the design and delivery of change programs.

#### Investing in leadership development

Universities are recognising the importance of ensuring that change initiatives are leader-led and are investing in leadership development to equip leaders with the skills to lead effectively through change and transition. However, leadership development must be tailored to the organisation, to address capability gaps and amplify the leadership strengths of the university.

Table 3 lists some examples of approaches used by universities to shift workforce culture.

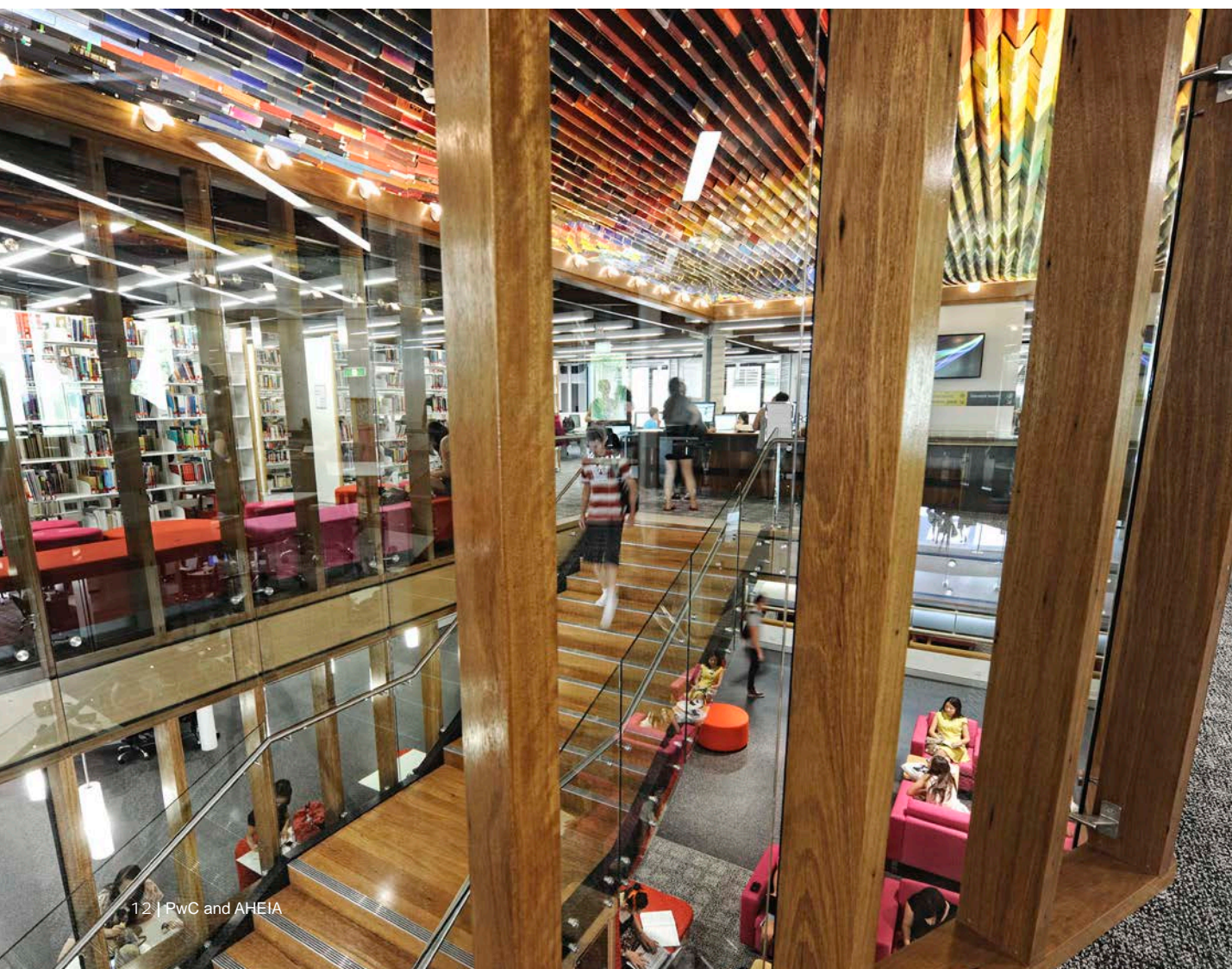


Table 3: Examples of approaches used by universities to shift workforce culture

Approach	Examples
<b>Increased focus on staff engagement and effective communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilising a variety of channels such as VC forums, staff forums, focus groups, staff intranet, newsletters, encouragement of team meetings in all areas and use of innovative engagement tools, e.g. <i>Crowdicity</i>, to enable effective consultation processes to engage with stakeholders impacted by change.</li> <li>Providing transparency of change rationale and the effort that is required to effect change affecting the organisation by publishing communications on a central website.</li> <li>Investing in initiatives aimed at improving workplace communication and communication behaviours. One initiative involves upskilling staff to communicate professionally, positively and productively; to avoid and resolve conflicts and to reduce negative communication behaviours in teams.</li> </ul>
<b>Establishing change management functions and methodologies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing a Change Management CoE that provides change management education and capability development for leaders, Project Managers and various teams to embed PROSCI and ADKAR change management methodology.</li> <li>Investing in front-line change support resources.</li> <li>Developing and implementing a framework for leading and managing change that enables change to take place from involving staff in change, meeting consultation requirements with transparency, and providing early support to staff around redeployment.</li> <li>Creation of a “Change Portal” that provides frameworks and collateral to assist leaders to carry out a consistent change management approach.</li> </ul>
<b>Investing in leadership development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a <i>Senior Leadership Program</i> focused on culture and leadership capability.</li> <li>Providing tailored development for executive team, as individuals and working together as a team, to support the development and implementation of a new strategic plan.</li> <li>Developing leadership capability frameworks.</li> <li>Introducing a new leadership development strategy for senior leaders, including extensive leadership coaching and 360-degree feedback; designing and launching a new capability framework to promote excellence and innovation.</li> <li>Utilising a variety of methods to develop leadership and management capability, improve internal communication and define and build culture across the university, including: women in leadership, leadership development, culture and engagement, internal communications, leading change via the PROSCI model and using modern tools to develop team-based cultures and collaborative behaviours.</li> <li>Investing in hiring leaders with change management expertise.</li> </ul>
<b>Instilling a mindset that change is a constant to the way universities work and which recognises equity and diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilising a number of significant change initiatives that have collectively resulted in “change” as a constant to the way the university works.</li> <li>Utilising the launch of the University Plan to shift the university culture towards embracing change.</li> <li>Building cultural competence through diversity and inclusion initiatives such as Athena SWAN accreditation, Pride and Diversity and Cultural and Unconscious Bias capability building.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration and new ways of working</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing cross-collaborative working groups, representing various levels and cohorts of staff across the organisation, with accountability for re-imagining the way things work.</li> <li>Adopting lean agile project management methodologies in support services.</li> </ul>
<b>Enterprise agreement managing change processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streamlining EA processes to enable change to happen quickly and efficiently.</li> <li>Revising EA processes to enable the university to apply a process suited to the particular change being managed.</li> </ul>



Approach	Examples
<b>Organisational design and structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removing the Faculty layer and reducing the number of schools to reposition academic operations so that newly established schools can act without the constraints of previous layers and unnecessary bureaucracy.</li> <li>Establishing academic school boards to improve academic governance and provide academic leadership at an operational and strategic level, supporting the Head of School.</li> <li>Transitioning sessional staff to be ongoing staff.</li> <li>Establishing a Strategic Programs Office to support the design and delivery of all major programs of change.</li> </ul>
<b>Recognition and reward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing recognition mechanisms to reward new ways of working, e.g. team awards and academic promotion.</li> <li>Utilising Higher Education Academy Fellowships to recognise, reward and celebrate quality teaching.</li> </ul>
<b>Business and process improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing a multi-year program to drive business and process improvements that will lead to opportunities for a more sustainable and secure university future. The program has introduced a consistent approach to a range of functions and operational processes across the university.</li> <li>Undertaking Finance Business Transformation, including deployment of a new finance management system and operating model.</li> </ul>



## 3.2 WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

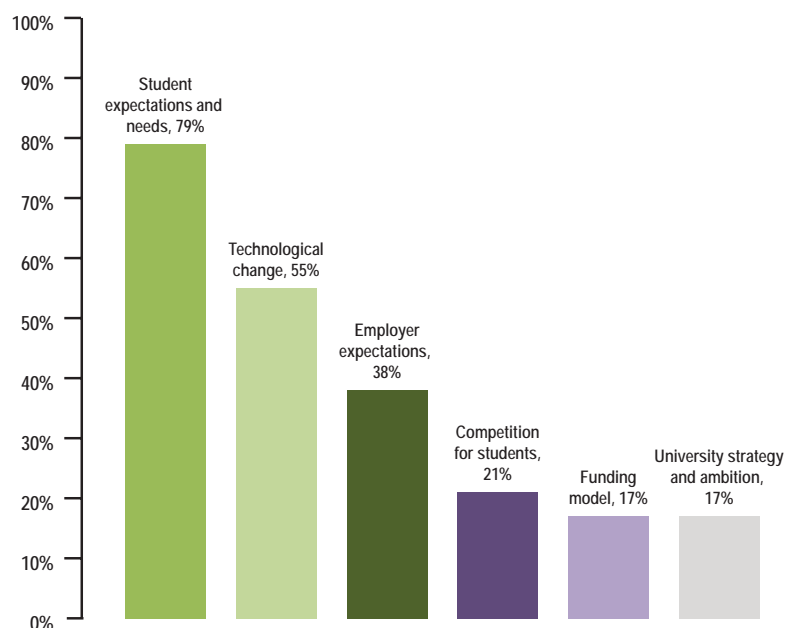
### Drivers of change in the past four years

In line with the projections made in the 2016 report, student expectations and needs (79%), technological change (55%) and employer expectations (38%) were the most commonly cited drivers of change within universities during the past four years. Although government policy and funding arrangements was ranked highest in 2016 as the driver most likely to impact universities in the following 10-15 years, only 17% of universities surveyed reported policy and funding as being a subsequent driver of change. In addition, competition (specifically for students) and universities' strategy and ambitions are also mentioned as key drivers of change (Figure 3).

### Workforce reform and transformation progress

The university sector has undertaken many significant workforce transformation projects and initiatives over the past four years that have led to significant advances across workforce structure, workforce capability and workforce engagement. Alongside the spectre of this workforce reform, recruitment and turnover rates of Australian universities

Figure 3: Most common drivers of change for universities in the past four years



have remained relatively stable.<sup>2</sup>

This stability may not last, however, and universities will need to be prepared for periods of growth and fluctuations in turnover and recruitment rates.

Examples of significant workforce transformation initiatives that universities have undertaken are listed in Table 4.

<sup>2</sup>Australian Higher Education Industrial Association, Universities HR Benchmarking Program, 2019.

Table 4: Examples of significant workforce transformation projects/ initiatives

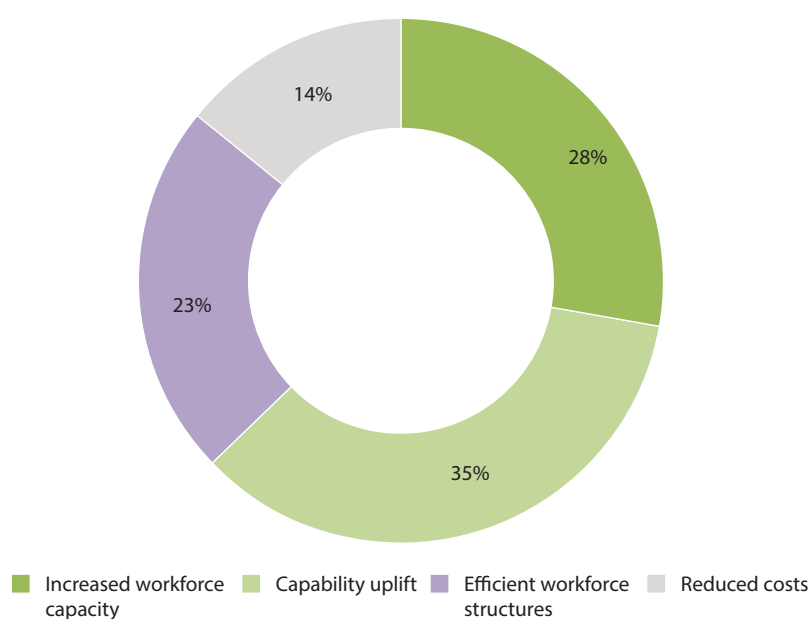
Category	Examples of transformation project/ initiative
<b>Organisation design and restructures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole of university restructure</li> <li>• Academic reorganisation</li> <li>• Faculty structure review and reorganisation</li> <li>• Activation of distributed leadership model</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership development programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leadership Culture Program</i></li> <li>• <i>Women in Leadership Program</i></li> <li>• <i>Change Leaders Workshop</i></li> </ul>
<b>Performance management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management strategy</li> <li>• Academic performance matrix and evidence</li> <li>• Introduction of academic benchmarks</li> </ul>
<b>Professional development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capability development framework</li> <li>• Career development strategy and associated training</li> </ul>
<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Athena SWAN Program</i> and <i>Sage Bronze</i> accreditation</li> <li>• <i>Broderick Review</i> and action plan</li> </ul>

## Benefits realised from workforce transformation initiatives

Whilst transformation initiatives take up significant time and resources, they also create the potential for universities to realise significant benefits across workforce capacity, capability uplift, workforce structures and cost.

For the significant workforce transformation projects/ initiatives completed by universities, capability uplift (35%) was the most important benefit realised, followed by increased workforce capacity (28%), efficient workforce structures (23%) and then reduced costs (14%), refer to Figure 4.

Figure 4: Most important benefits realised from significant workforce transformation projects/ initiatives





## Approaches used to realise benefits of workforce transformation initiatives

Across all universities surveyed, five themes emerged that were critical to realising the benefits of their transformation initiatives:

- 1. Creating a clear vision and rationale for change**  
– Universities cited a clear vision and rationale for change aligned to university strategy as an enabler of realising benefits. Linking the vision to the strategic priorities and objectives of the university allows for the creation of a consistent and transparent change narrative that is easily understood and bought into.
- 2. Leadership buy-in** – Along with a clear vision for change, universities emphasised leadership buy-in and endorsement as being a critical enabler for realising workforce initiative benefits.
- 3. Authentic engagement and communication** – Extensive consultation and open, two-way communication were cited as enabling universities to drive outcomes that are informed by input from the workforce.
- 4. Co-design and collaboration**  
– Co-design and collaborative ways of working across the university were recognised as promoting innovative and multidisciplinary thinking. Agile principles and methodologies are also being employed by some universities to drive collaboration and new ways of working.

- 5. Leveraging data** – Universities are placing importance on leveraging data to support the need for change and to monitor progress towards achieving change outcomes. The use of data is providing universities with the ability to provide practical examples and explanations on the return on investment of initiatives.

## Challenges with workforce transformation initiatives

Despite 72% of universities agreeing the workforce has positively shifted towards embracing change, one of the most prominent challenges facing universities is shifting the large cohort of staff who have anxiety about change, and a change resistant mindset that “this is how we’ve always done it”. Some universities also cite a high level of “change fatigue” amongst staff as a result of undergoing constant change. University workforces must embrace the need for the status quo to be constantly challenged, and to ensure that reform initiatives deliver value for universities – as demonstrated in the case studies included in this report.

For many universities, the scale and complexity of required change presents a significant challenge. Integration of different components of the change initiative (technology, people, process) across different portfolios, and sometimes across different physical locations, requires significant investment in project planning and resources

with the capacity, capability and connection points to lead successful change. The breadth of stakeholders (both internal and external) also necessitates a strong commitment to sophisticated and well thought through engagement strategies.

Although named as one of the mechanisms to drive successful change, some universities view effective and meaningful communication as having challenges, including:

- striking the balance between “sharing as much as possible without overloading staff”
- communicating with clarity and purpose in a way that is meaningful for the relevant audience
- the timing and use of appropriate communication channels to reach staff

Some universities also cited a challenging industrial environment and a history of industrial reaction to change as a key challenge to realising reform objectives. This includes union-initiated proceedings in courts and the Fair Work Commission perceived to be in pursuit of dragging out the change process timeline rather than to address supposed procedural deficiencies.

## 3.3 OBSTACLES TO WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

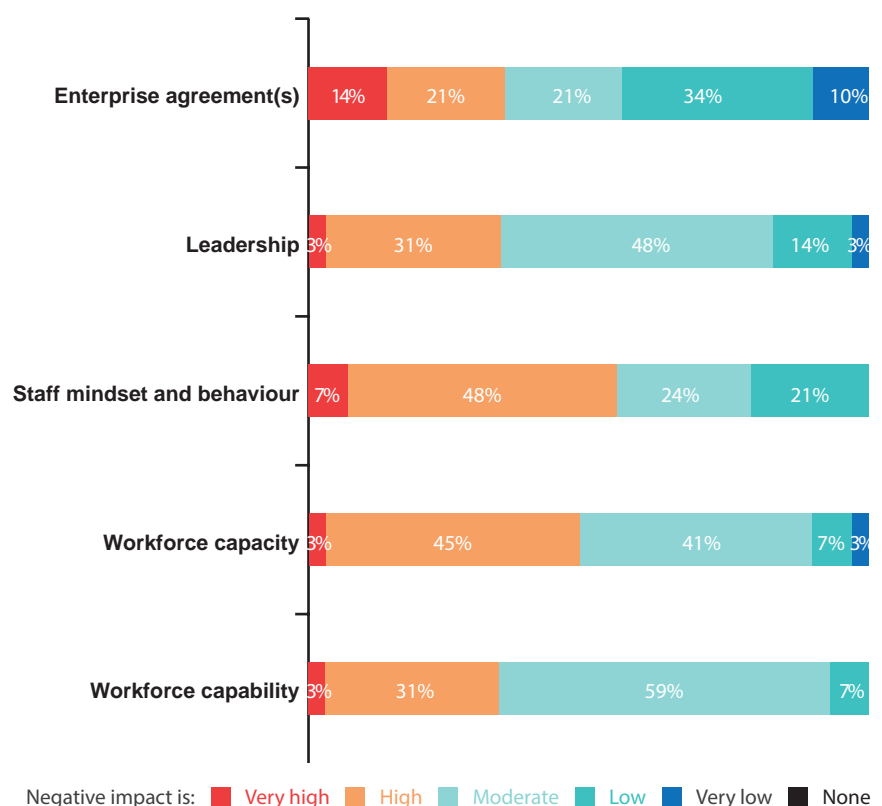
### Internal factors standing in the way of achieving strategic workforce objectives

Universities view staff mindset and behaviour as well as capacity of the workforce as having the highest negative impact on their ability to achieve strategic workforce objectives, with 55% and 48% of universities ranking these factors as having a very high or high negative impact respectively (Figure 5).

In terms of staff mindset and behaviour, resistance to change and a fear of the unknown are specifically referenced as being detrimental to successful change efforts, with one university describing its workforce as having a “strong contrary and anti-authority streak”. Additionally, a perceived bias towards preferencing academic leader opinions over others is also said to still exist at some universities, resulting in missed opportunities to harness diverse opinions and experiences.

Limited workforce capacity is impinging on universities’ ability to carry out all required activity, particularly as most universities have set themselves ambitious change agendas, whilst also managing organic growth and navigating a challenging external environment. Limited workforce capacity was linked with budgetary constraints, which was

Figure 5: Extent to which universities perceive deficiencies of internal factors having a negative impact on the university achieving strategic workforce objectives



referenced by some universities as an additional internal factor that has had a negative impact on universities achieving their strategic workforce objectives.

There were differing views with respect to the impact of enterprise agreements (EAs) on universities achieving their strategic workforce objectives. Some universities view their EAs as restricting their flexibility and responsiveness, with one university highlighting

EA restrictions on employment models (e.g. caps on casual and fixed term contracts). Conversely, other universities view their recently negotiated EAs as enablers of change, with one university describing its new EA as being “instrumental in enabling us to progress in a modern and commercial way.”

Approximately one third of the universities surveyed believed that deficiencies in leadership and workforce capability are having a high or very high negative impact on universities' ability to achieve their strategic goals. This includes changes in leadership which impact on universities' change momentum and a lack of executive capability to deliver change.

In addition to the internal factors in Figure 5, Table 5 lists internal factors that are negatively impacting universities' ability to achieve their strategic workforce objectives.

### External factors standing in the way of achieving strategic workforce objectives

The most commonly cited external factors that universities reported as having a negative impact on achieving strategic workforce objectives were funding (cited by 22 universities) and a changing policy environment (cited by 10 universities). Other external factors included: union opposition to change, and increased competition for funding, students and talent.

**Table 5: Other internal factors negatively impacting on universities achieving strategic workforce objectives**

Internal factor	Description
<b>Budgetary and resource constraints</b>	An overall lack of funding and funding commitments made in better times are impacting universities' ability to appropriately react and mobilise sufficient resources to effect necessary change.
<b>Cost of change to the workforce</b>	Provisions in enterprise agreements that are out of alignment with community standards affect the capacity of universities to implement change in a timely and cost-efficient manner. This includes high redundancy payments, often inclusive of lengthy notice periods, and costs occasioned by delays in change occurring.
<b>Competing priorities</b>	Lack of strategic prioritisation at the executive level is resulting in universities juggling competing priorities, which has the potential to increase the level of change fatigue and resistance experienced by staff.
<b>Low staff turnover</b>	Some universities are experiencing low levels of staff turnover, particularly those universities that are regionally located. Having a low staff turnover makes it difficult for universities to effect change when long term staff are unsupportive of the new direction. This also reduces the benefits derived from a healthy level of staff renewal on the culture of the university.
<b>Lack of accountability of middle management</b>	Supervisors and middle management are seen to lack accountability in their role of effecting organisational decisions and management practices and rather see themselves as affected by change rather than the drivers of change.
<b>Technology and data</b>	Outdated technology systems that don't link or contain conflicting data are impacting universities' ability to make timely, data driven decisions, and involve labour intensive processes to clean and leverage data for decision making.



## 3.4 WORKFORCE CAPABILITY

### Changing skill requirements

Universities have been working to address the changing skill requirements across the sector, as the capabilities and characteristics required of the workforce to deliver in the future university environment continue to evolve.

With digitisation and the growing accessibility of knowledge, universities are prioritising expert facilitation and delivery of experiential learning, with all universities agreeing (66%) or strongly agreeing (34%) that these skills are an area of focus. As the uses of flipped classroom models and blended learning techniques continue to increase, these skills will be critical in the future university environment.

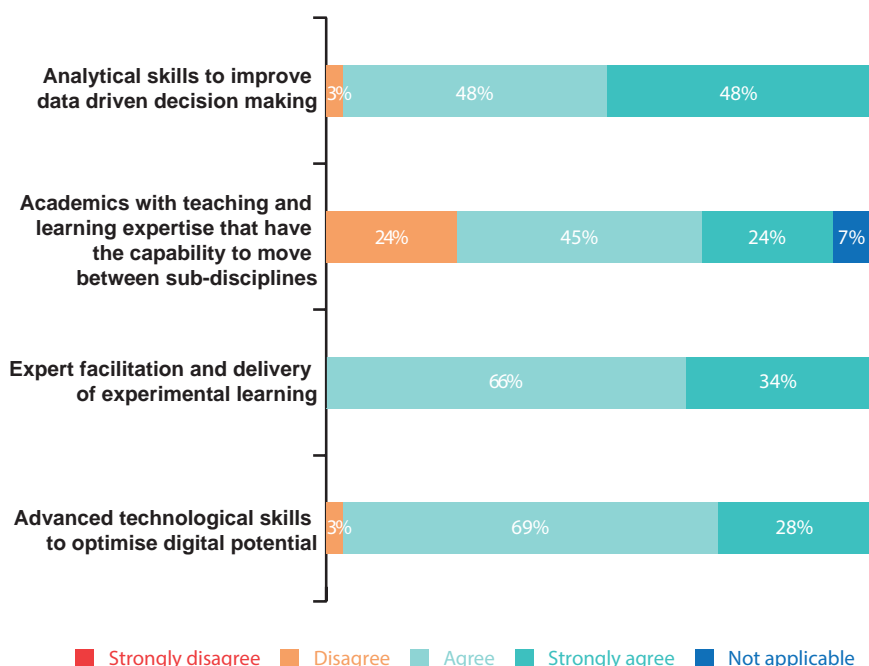
Demonstrating the value universities are placing on their ability to make better data driven decisions, almost half of universities strongly agree that building the workforce's analytical skills is of great importance. Universities are recognising they have a long way to go before they are able to harness the potential of being able to link and analyse data within the decision-making process, with one university commenting: "We could be a lot more effective about what direction to move if we had better data - we'd avoid the trial and error inefficiencies".

Similarly, 97% of universities agree (69%) or strongly agree (28%) that having a workforce with advanced technological skills

is a priority in order to leverage technology in both teaching and research to optimise digital potential and improve the student experience. 65% of universities surveyed reported a focus on creating technological based roles such as educational designers to enhance the online learning experience.

There was mixed opinion as to the need for academics with teaching and learning expertise to have the capability to move between sub-disciplines, with 24% of universities not seeing this as a priority.

Figure 6: Extent to which universities are focusing on addressing changing skill requirements of their workforces

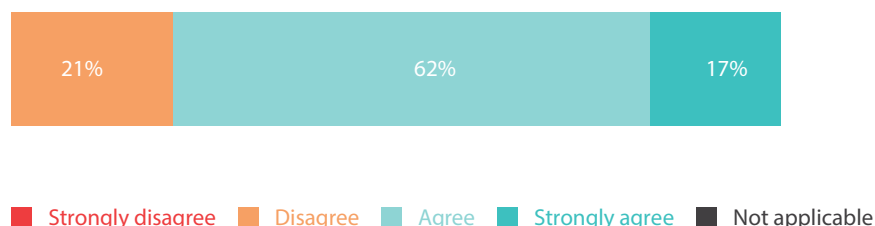


## Leadership

It is vital that university leaders have the capability to successfully lead change to enable the sector to navigate constant change and address external drivers impacting universities. Universities have mixed views on whether leaders have led change successfully in the last four years, however the majority (62%) agree this has been the case (Figure 7).

The universities who responded to the survey reflected on the numerous change initiatives and how leaders have driven successful outcomes over the past four years. A number of common success factors are provided in Table 6.

Figure 7: Extent to which university leaders have led successfully through change



In order to fully realise the benefits of change initiatives, universities need to invest in developing leaders' capability to lead successful change. Case Studies 1 and 2 highlight how La Trobe University and University of Technology Sydney have

developed bespoke leadership programs to develop and support their leaders to lead different types of change, including culture, diversity and inclusion, workplace health and safety and performance management.

Table 6: Success factors used by leaders to drive successful change outcomes

Success factors	Examples
<b>Highly collaborative approaches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption of a collaborative approach to managing relationships with unions and staff directly.</li> <li>Development of an enterprise bargaining strategy aligned to organisational strategy, working with the senior executives to achieve the outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>Leaders are role modelling values and championing change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enacting and living the university values, being a positive role model and champion through large and complex change.</li> </ul>
<b>Establishing and communicating a compelling case for change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of a compelling case for change and ensuring consistency in how it is messaged and communicated.</li> </ul>
<b>Clear, consistent and transparent communications and engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively engaging staff by being visible and active in change e.g. undertaking a VC-led forum to engage staff in organisational progress, decision making and issues.</li> <li>Use of clear, consistent and transparent communications to ensure those impacted by change are informed and supported.</li> </ul>
<b>Continuous reflections and application of lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflection of key learning throughout the change effort to continuously refine and improve processes undertaken.</li> </ul>

## Case Study 1: Developing leaders for the Future

In 2015 La Trobe University formed a Senior Leadership Group (SLG). The SLG incorporated representation of the top 120 leaders across all campuses at the university. One of the problems the SLG identified was an issue with culture at the university, which was uncovered through numerous failed attempts at trying to make change stick at a local level. There was an overall lack of understanding and identification of the required La Trobe University culture, how to hold all people accountable for living the cultural qualities and how to systemically embed the required culture to ensure that La Trobe's people and culture were key enablers in the achievement of strategic objectives.

In 2018, the university developed a 2018-2022 culture strategy that set out La Trobe's cultural qualities and an institution-wide view of what these qualities looked like through a behavioural lens. This was called *The Way We Work (TWWW)*. This was then tailored and contextualised for schools, colleges, campuses, faculties and departments. As part of efforts to systemically operationalise the 2018-2022 culture strategy, La Trobe developed the *Culture Influencer Leadership Development Program (CIDLP)* to build critical leadership capability, with a focus on leading and embedding cultural change.

24 leaders were identified from the La Trobe talent pool to take part in a pilot one-year leadership program. Key initiatives included:

- attending culture masterclasses
- attending 'way we work' sessions
- facilitating 'way we work' sessions
- attending guest speaker sessions
- attending 'walk in my shoes' sessions
- hosting lunch and learns with the Vice-Chancellor
- Executive Leadership shadowing
- leading client groups where Influencers would provide expert advice on how to lead culture change

The leaders involved in the CIDLP have been key to operationalising La Trobe's culture. These Influencers have received recognition from university leaders on the positive cumulative impact the program has had on the university's culture. The program has also been instrumental in the Influencer's progression and development at the university.

Bringing the culture strategy to life has enabled the university to:

- Manage performance in accordance with the desired cultural qualities, providing a framework to identify and call out poor behaviours and conduct as well as recognising and rewarding positive performance (the 'what' and the 'how' measures of holistic performance).
- Make informed recruitment decisions to ensure cultural fit (instead of favouring technical skills).

However, the university still faces a number of challenges with respect to culture change:

- It is difficult to measure the impact of culture change initiatives in relation to organisational performance.
- Changing the perception that culture is not 'another thing to do, another job', rather it is a 'way of being and doing'.
- Addressing the perception that culture is seen as 'HR's issue', rather than as needing to be leader-led and owned by all.

For La Trobe, the key learning is that unless you integrate culture in all work, systems and behaviours at the same time, effecting cultural change will be challenging - continuous systemic integration is an effective way to permeate and impact culture.



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Beyond the CIDLP, La Trobe is also engaging in a series of other programs described below that are focused on developing and engaging leaders at the university. Each program is integrated and aligned to the cultural qualities set out in the culture strategy.

*Gender Diversity in Leadership Program:*

This program has been developed to identify the systemic barriers from a gender diversity and inclusion perspective at the university. Participants of the program completed in-depth analysis to develop a series of recommendations that have been endorsed for implementation in 2020. Recommendations included unconscious bias training for hiring panels and changes to the recruitment process including 50/50 gender split shortlisting requirements.

*Psychological Safety in Teams Program:*

To enable a safe and inclusive environment at the university, this program aims to equip leaders with the skills to identify individuals who may be suffering from mental health issues.

*Gender Inclusivity Program:*

Targeted at senior men, this program involves a series of in-depth listening posts and participants receiving feedback to identify gender inclusivity blind spots. Participants then develop an action plan to address the blind spots and complete a video journey to demonstrate progress made.

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## Case Study 2: Developing leaders for the Future

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) has designed a number of initiatives aimed at engaging and developing leaders. The *Managing for Performance Program* and *Mindful Leaders Program* were developed to build leadership capability, with a focus on how to build personal leadership capability and more effectively manage their people.

### *Managing for Performance Program:*

In 2014, UTS developed the *Managing for Performance Program* to address the observed leadership capability gaps in the practical skills of each stage of performance management. The program started as an academic only program to equip leaders with the skills to manage people across the performance management lifecycle, including:

- setting goals
- giving and receiving feedback
- monitoring performance
- conducting 6 monthly 'check in' conversations
- having difficult conversations
- leaders' role as a coach

Components of the program include five separate half day modules on topics outlined above, coaching sessions, phone interviews, pre and post surveys, and complementary support resources such as reading and LinkedIn learning.

The program supported the introduction of academic benchmarks to promote excellence across UTS, with the primary focus being on academic output and impact, and quality over quantity. The benchmarks created consistent performance

expectations and accountability, shifting the focus of the workforce to academic excellence.

Anecdotally, staff who have taken part in the program acknowledge a greater sense of confidence in dealing with people issues, which was supported by a perceived increase in skill level from the pre and post program survey. Across the institution there has been an increase in identification and management of staff performance issues, indicating leaders are stepping up into their roles of managing people.

Since 2014, the program has been tailored for different faculties and is now also offered to professional staff. Additionally, the program has been unbundled so individuals can attend one module rather than all five and engage in coaching as a separate offering.

### *Mindful Leaders Program:*

With the introduction of academic benchmarks, academics at UTS had clear and consistent performance expectations. This created an environment where academics were expected to meet academic benchmarks (with appropriate support and development) and to perform at a required level. This placed increasing expectations on staff and meant that leaders needed strategies to lead and appropriately manage their teams.

Targeting senior academic leaders, the *Mindful Leaders Program* was developed to build personal resilience, increase focus on presence and awareness and introduce the concept of mindfulness. Similar to the *Managing for Performance Program*, this blended program

involves 3 one day workshops supported by coaching and resources to embed the skills and practices.

Results from the pre and post program survey have indicated an increase in academic leaders' ability to bounce back after stressful periods. Feedback from academic leaders also reported increased use of mindfulness practices and positive differences in behaviours and engagement levels.

The success of both the *Managing for Performance* and *Mindful Leaders Programs* was attributed to a number of factors, including:

- The co-creation process employed by the university to develop the programs and align to UTS strategy and capability frameworks. This resulted in greater engagement and the perception that leadership programs can be valuable, a notion that goes against the cynicism historically felt by academics in reference to leadership programs.
- Taking a bespoke rather than one size fits all approach to developing programs to ensure programs are relevant to UTS's people, culture, challenges and environment.
- A cultural shift amongst academics towards acknowledging that leadership is hard and realising the university can provide support.
- Positive feedback from early participants created an environment where the programs were well perceived as creating value.

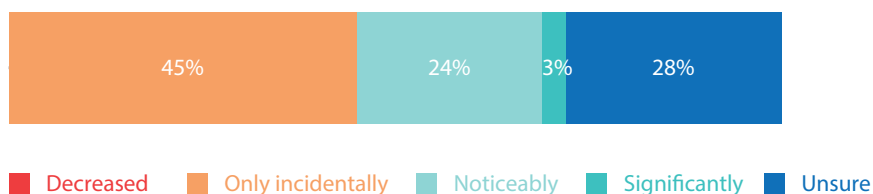
## Practical and/or Industry Experience

The expectation of students and industry that universities provide practical and employable skills dictates the need for a growing number of academics with practical and industry experience.

27% of universities reported a noticeable (24%) or significant (3%) increase over the past four years in the proportion of academic staff who have practical and/or industry experience. While no university cited a decrease, almost half of universities indicated an incidental increase (Figure 8).

When asked what academic discipline area would require practical and/or industry experience in the future, 11 of the 29 universities indicated

Figure 8: Extent to which the proportion of academic staff at the university with practical and/or industry experience has increased



that this would be a requirement of all disciplines. With respect to individual discipline areas, business (51%), engineering (41%), health (34%), law (27%) and technology (24%) scored highest in terms of needing practical and/or industry experience.

To increase the diversity of workforce experience outside of academia, universities are

reviewing their talent acquisition strategy and processes. The University of Canberra's *Academic Talent Acquisition Campaign and Methodology* initiative outlined in Case Study 3 has been integral in removing unconscious bias in the university's recruitment processes and tapping into passive markets to access diverse talent.

## Case Study 3: Evolving talent acquisition to attract diverse talent

In the past, the University of Canberra has faced challenges related to talent acquisition. A particular challenge was unconscious bias in the recruitment process, which resulted in recruitment decisions being made with a 'people like me' mentality. The *Academic Talent Acquisition Campaign and Methodology* initiative is seeking to change the way the university recruits - specifically to increase access to diverse talent and to remove unconscious barriers and biases from the recruitment process. The initiative has been key in driving diversity in the workforce, aligning with the university's strategy.

The campaign and methodology focus on access to talent by tapping into the passive market rather than active market, which is reinforced by a fair and transparent recruitment process

that is flexible and adaptable for the candidate. The methodology has been developed to align with the university's strategy to ensure recruits match the student and university proposition. For example, the recruitment process leverages technology in the form of video interviews to test the digital capability of each candidate, which is a key focus for the university. In addition, conversations throughout the recruitment process have moved away from traditional behaviour-based questioning to mutual interest conversations. This allows both the candidate and the university to test for cultural fit. The recruitment process does not require candidates to submit referees, with some hiring decisions being made directly from the video interview process.

A further challenge faced by the university was addressing the

'pack mentality' held by staff that the university is investing in talent acquisition because 'every other university is'. The university has needed to reframe hiring as an investment decision that enables access to diverse talent and competitive advantage.

Since the launch of the *Academic Talent Acquisition Campaign and Methodology*, the University of Canberra has seen:

- time to fill reduce to 45 days (from time when position is advertised to accepted offer)
- increased volume of hires from diverse backgrounds, including practitioners from industry and females with STEM backgrounds
- improved performance and productivity amongst staff



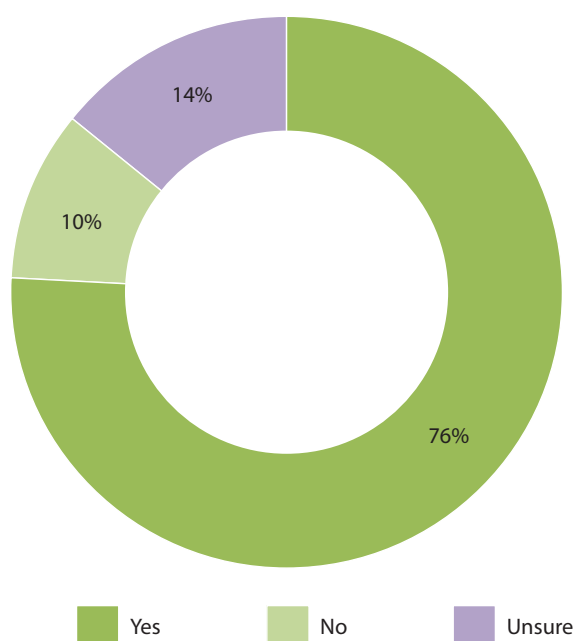


## Behaviours

### Change Agility

The university workforce is recognising the inevitability of constant change and this is being exhibited in staff behaviour (Figure 9). Staff are becoming less resistant to change and are now “more concerned about how change happens, rather than whether it should happen at all”. Although staff in general are showing a growing willingness to embrace change, it was also stated that this is heavily dependent on the local culture and leadership in the division being impacted.

Figure 9: Perception of whether the university workforce has become more adept to change



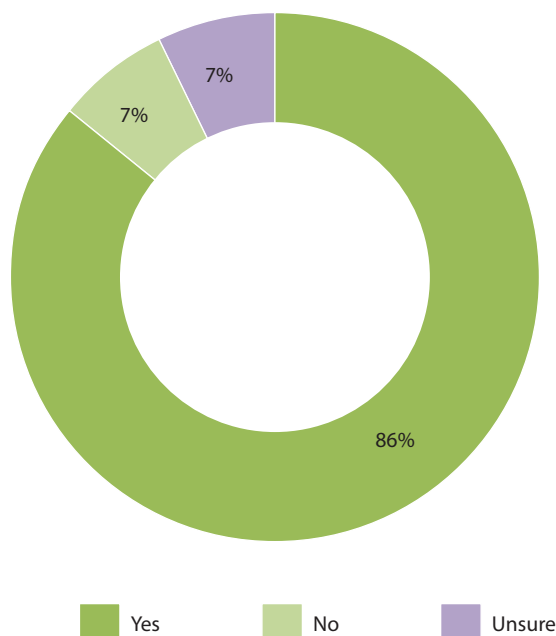
## Collaboration

86% of universities agree there has been improvement in collaboration and communication across the university workforce (Figure 10), aiding the successful implementation of change initiatives.

A variety of strategies are being employed to successfully drive collaboration and communication at universities, such as:

- using different modes of collaboration including staff forums, focus groups, communities of practice as well as innovative technology platforms, as outlined in Case Study 4
- addressing complex business problems by bringing academic and professional staff together to problem solve collaboratively
- creating cross-functional teams from different areas of the university, e.g. multidisciplinary research centres
- improving internal communication channels to connect staff, e.g. Yammer and Delve
- leveraging internal communication channels to share positive messages and success stories about the power of collaboration

Figure 10: Perception of whether there have been improvements in communication and collaboration between different groups of staff at the university





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## Case Study 4: Using technology to engage and collaborate differently

UTS leveraged an interactive crowdsourcing platform called *Crowdicity* to employ a bottom up approach for developing the university's 2027 strategy. The tool was used to engage staff, alumni and external stakeholders.

Staff were initially asked to explore and generate ideas around six key areas:

- lifelong learning
- excellent, seamless student experience
- a creative and collaborative working environment
- good to do business with
- transformational research
- social justice and community

This was followed by a first round of alumni and industry consultation focused on shortlisted staff ideas.

All alumni and invited industry partners had access to the *Crowdicity* portal to comment, like, and vote on ideas or to email thoughts directly. This was complemented by student consultation and engagement. Key themes emerged and post this period consultation focused on testing key aspects of the strategy.

The innovative approach and collaborative tool led to a strong level of contribution and engagement, empowering staff, students and other stakeholders

to get involved in the co-creation of the strategy. Following the launch of the UTS 2027 strategy a communication strategy was developed to provide updates on progress against the strategy and initiatives. Results from the university's staff engagement survey indicate an increase in engagement and understanding of university objectives across the university, with a result 15% above the Australian universities average.

### Engagement

Engagement with industry and the broader community is a strategic priority for all universities, with 93% indicating the workforce has become more engaged with industry and the community over the past four years (Figure 11). This highlights the recognition that industry partnerships are crucial in providing students with the practical work experience favoured by employers, and in attracting research funding and driving innovation and greater research outcomes. Universities

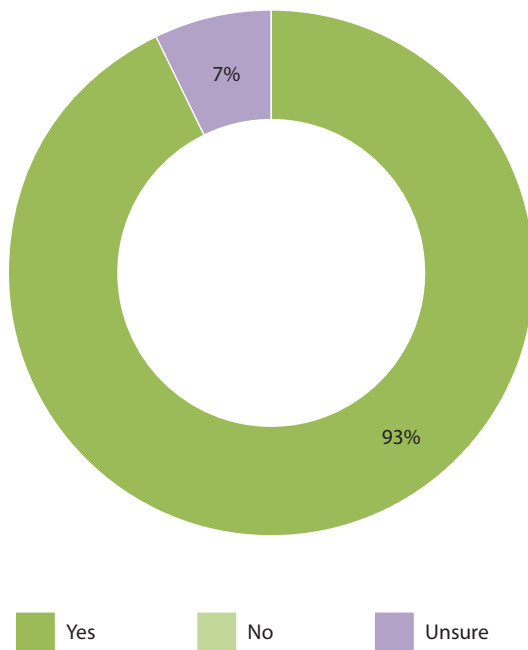
are driving industry and community engagement through different mechanisms, including:

- developing hubs and physical spaces to encourage collaboration e.g. innovation hubs and precincts to support industry, particularly start-ups
- introducing work integrated learning and industry placements into existing and newly designed courses
- establishing industry engagement KPIs, and providing industry facing staff with support and resources to perform their roles effectively

- establishing dedicated teams and roles at the university to accelerate industry partnerships, e.g. Deans of Engagement, Community Engagement Portfolio
- using research as a catalyst to drive engagement, e.g. establishing research networks where researchers, industry and the community partner to solve global challenges, e.g. a Transdisciplinary Impact Research Networks initiative



Figure 11: Perception of whether the university workforce is more engaged with industry and the broader community



In addition to engaging industry and the broader community, the University of Newcastle has turned its attention towards improving how the university engages and supports its own sessional workforce; a sector of the workforce that is becoming increasingly important for influencing universities' reputation in the market, as outlined in Case Study 5.



## Case Study 5: Accommodating the changing nature of the academic workforce

Similar to many other sectors, universities have experienced a shift towards the casualisation of the workforce. The University of Newcastle (UON) started to look at this issue in 2011 and came to the realisation that its sessional (casual) workforce was the coal face of the university for most students. Students viewed their experience of the university through their interaction with this group, which in turn influenced the university's reputation in the market. Despite this, the sessional cohort felt undervalued and not part of the institution. The university needed to understand the needs of this cohort in order to support and engage them to deliver an exceptional student experience.

In 2011, the UON commissioned a review of the sessional academic workforce. The review analysed a range of data including historical trends, segmentation of the sessional academic workforce cohorts and performance indicators. The review also examined the drivers and aspirations of this cohort, length of service and the provision of university facilities and services.

Post the review and after lengthy consultation, the *UON Academy* was established in 2013 as one of the identified strategies in the New Directions Future Workforce Plan 2013-2015. The strategy was to establish the *UON Academy*, to recognise the importance of the contribution of sessional and casual academic staff by providing systematic support for their engagement, development and performance. The *UON Academy* was included in the University of Newcastle Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement in 2014 and signalled a positive step to

addressing some of the needs of this workforce from an institutional level.

The *UON Academy* founding goals were to implement a systematic approach to the recruitment, career development, performance management, recognition and professional support for casual/sessional, including conjoint academic staff. The aim was to create a locus for professional affiliation, identity and community among the casual and sessional academic workforce and provide staff with a single point of contact for members via the *UON Academy* website.

The university set up a working group with the intention of developing a better understanding of what was causing sessional staff to feel undervalued. Findings from focus groups exposed a number of contributing pain points, including:

- absence of an induction
- limited access to support materials (e.g. learning and development resources)
- library and Blackboard access being revoked at the end of the year, meaning that despite having been rehired for the following year staff could not complete work over the break
- no access to parking

In addition, it was identified that different cohorts exist within the sessional academic workforce, all with different needs. This finding dispelled the perception that all sessional academics want ongoing roles at the university.

In response, the university embarked on a number of successful initiatives, backed by

executive support, to engage and support sessional staff, including:

- **Structured recruitment and selection** – a 'Recruitment and Selection guideline for the Appointment of Sessional Academic staff' was developed to provide structure, fairness and rigour. The guideline included the development of a generic sessional academic position description and online expression of interest process to facilitate a best practice approach to recruitment and selection at UON.
- **Access to IT services** – to assist with the continuity of library, parking and IT access the *UON Academy* mandated all sessional academic contracts span across the entire year, rather than ceasing during semester breaks.
- **Tailored communication and engagement** – dedicated website, regular e-news, dedicated LinkedIn account and email address.
- **Access to tailored professional development** - sessional staff have access to all online programs available to all staff at UON as well as tailored orientation to teaching and teaching fundamental programs run by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Additionally, a sessional staff skill-building and information expo was piloted in 2019 with positive feedback.

- **Structured orientation and induction** - a best practice approach to university wide orientation with a requirement for staff to undertake four online modules as part of their orientation (university wide online orientation), *UON Academy* online orientation (specific to sessional staff), Health and Safety online orientation and Equity and Diversity online orientation.

- **Change in terminology** – the *UON Academy* championed a terminology change institutionally with Vice-Chancellor approval from ‘casual academic’ to ‘sessional academic’ to signify and recognise the value and contribution of sessional academic staff at UON.

- **Contributory superannuation** - the *UON Academy* championed a change to the UniSuper policy to allow sessional academic staff the option of contributory superannuation.

- **Reward and recognition** - the *UON Academy* funds a professional development scholarship of \$1000 annually for ‘excellence in teaching and enhancing the student experience’.

- **Access to networking events** - the *UON Academy* hosts various networking events throughout the year involving guest speakers, panel discussions, presentations about the *UON Academy* initiatives and sector specific hot topics as a way of connecting colleagues.

- **Sector consultation/sharing/ benchmarking** - the *UON Academy* team hosted and facilitated an inaugural ‘sessional academic forum’ that brought together teams from human resources, teaching and learning and academic and professional staff from five Australian universities at UON Sydney Campus to share experiences around supporting sessional academics.

To date there has been great anecdotal feedback from sessional academics who have engaged with the *UON Academy*, reinforcing the importance of not underestimating the value simple, practical initiatives can have on providing a sense of value and belonging. The next focus will be on how the university rewards and recognises the sessional workforce. Although there has been much progress, the university acknowledges that there’s still a way to go, particularly in addressing the mixed perceptions around the criticality of the sessional workforce as well as inequity of pay and workloads for sessional academics across the institution.

The establishment of the *UON Academy* and associated initiatives since 2013 have impacted on organisational culture and commitment. This is evidenced by sessional staff climate survey data administered by *Your Voice* (YV), which is an independently administered staff climate survey that is commonly commissioned across the university sector at regular time intervals.

The 2019 YV results showed:

- 97% of respondents are engaged - ‘I like the kind of work I do’
- 85% of respondents feel they had adequate resources
- 82% of respondents feel like they work as part of a team
- 78% of respondents are satisfied with access to technology to assist with teaching
- 73% of respondents would like to be working at UON in two years’ time

There is strong evidence to suggest that sessional academic staff will remain a key component of the higher education sector’s workforce into the future, and solid frameworks are needed to manage support, value and recognise this cohort of staff.

The *UON Academy* has been successfully embedded at the University of Newcastle and will continue to be a fundamental staffing initiative to engage, develop and support the sessional academic workforce.





## 3.5 WORKFORCE STRUCTURE

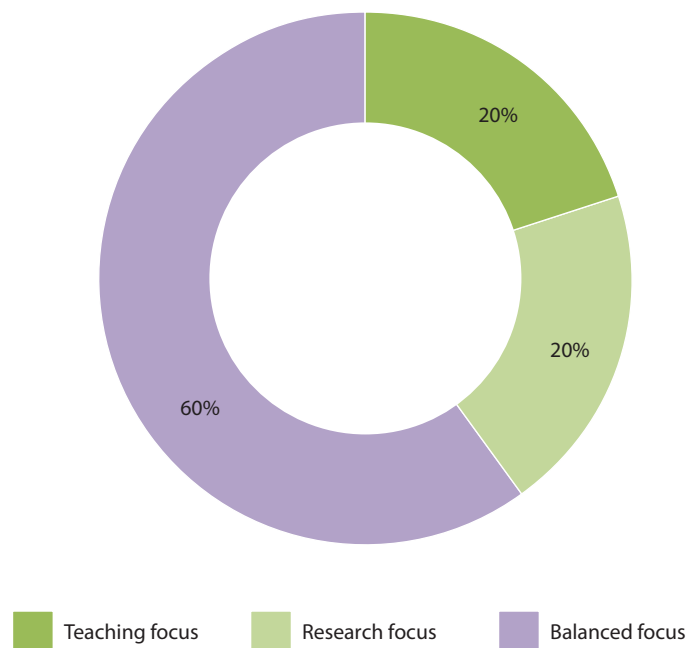
### Redesign of existing roles

Redesigning existing roles to support a more agile workforce is a critical enabler for universities to meet changing academic, research and service requirements now and in the future.

#### Workload allocation models

Having a flexible academic workload model was ranked as one of the most critical features of universities' future workforce design in the 2016 report. For some time, universities have been moving away from the traditional one size fits all "40/40/20" workload model to provide for greater divergence and specialisation, including positions that focus more intensively on teaching & learning or research. A similar shift can be seen throughout international universities. While the overall growth rate of the UK higher education workforce has steadily increased year on year, with a 15% increase since 2007/2008, there have been significant changes to contract trends within the academic workforce. Outstripping the overall growth rate, there has been a 33.2% increase in the number of staff employed on teaching focused contracts and a 21.2% increase in research focused contracts. There has been a comparatively smaller growth rate for staff on teaching and research contracts at 6.6%

Figure 12: Average workload allocation split across universities



from 2011/2012 to 2017/2018.<sup>3</sup>

The growth in teaching and research focused contracts can perhaps be explained by universities' commitment to align the workforce with the strategic objectives of the university and/or the strengths of academic staff, be that teaching excellence and/or impactful research.

As outlined in Figure 12, the average workload allocation split for universities surveyed

indicates that 20% of the academic workforce are focused on teaching, 20% are focused on research and 60% have a more mixed focus.

Case Studies 6, 7, and 8 outline how Victoria University, the Australian Catholic University and The University of Adelaide have revised their workload allocation models to cater for greater specialisation.

<sup>3</sup>Universities & Colleges Employers Association, Higher Education Workforce Report, 2019.

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## Case Study 6: Redefining the role of the academic

In 2016 Victoria University (VU) was faced with a number of significant challenges which required swift action and change to its restrictive industrial instrument. At the time, VU's enterprise agreement impeded the focus of academic staff away from core Learning and Teaching and Research, which resulted in staff spending a disproportionate amount of time on administrative tasks. VU needed to re-conceptualise the role of the academic to increase its focus on teaching excellence, impactful research and improve its competitiveness in the sector.

VU therefore established the *First Year College* with the intention of providing a quality experience for students in their first year. Multi-tiered consultation was conducted that began with industrial consultation and then, in parallel, engaged senior leaders and thought leaders to identify the attributes and structure of the new organisation. This co-creation was key to the successful implementation. From the outset, it was made clear that the focus of the *First Year College* was on teaching excellence, and the university recruited high quality educators to the college (from internal staff and the sessional pool) to create a new workforce, with 70% of their time spent on teaching. Recruitment of this new workforce focused on identifying academics with a true passion for teaching and sought attributes that were not traditionally typical of a university academic.

At the same time, VU created a new entity called *VU Research* which explicitly focused on ensuring that research conducted at the university was productive and in a flagship area set by the university. This enabled VU to make very deliberate decisions about how much it would invest in research and then "buy out" time, as revenue came from teaching.

VU facilitated voluntary departures to allow academics to opt-out of this new way of working, enabling the university to quickly create a culture that valued collaborating, engaging and interacting with students. The college changed the DNA of what VU does as a university and has helped redefine what it means to be a successful academic at VU.

The First Year College has enabled VU to build a workload allocation model narrative into its industrial agenda that increases and protects the time spent on quality teaching and impactful research.

Academics now understand that they have different options and opportunities and can be rewarded in different ways. VU credits the huge success of its reform with unwavering support and confidence from senior leaders and a multi-year, multi-tiered approach which pulled the right levers at the right time. The resulting space and empowerment have allowed the university to take advantage of opportunities each time they have presented themselves.



## Case Study 7: Refining the role of the academic

In 2011, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) recognised significant tension between quality teaching and research outcomes. The university knew it would need to resolve this tension in order to build a high performing workforce and attract employees who wanted to work at the university. A long-term project then commenced to reshape Academic Career Pathways and associated management practices and processes to achieve a high performing academic workforce, a more suitable academic workforce profile, and achieve success as a comprehensive teaching and research university. It has taken eight years to be fully realised with progressive highlights along the way.

Whilst ACU did not formally use the 40/40/20 workload allocation model in effect at many universities, it had over 90% of its academics in the traditional teaching and research roles. To compete, ACU needed to transform the way academics worked, how workload was allocated and performance assessed across research and teaching activities. To commence the journey, ACU wanted to understand the value individuals brought to the university, including which skill sets needed to be dialled up and down to help move closer to the ideal workforce split. Leveraging internally available research on international best practice, complemented with findings from internal consultation, the university developed the *Academic Career Framework*. The framework outlines a range of career trajectories available to academics, to recognise diversity

in skill sets and enhance individual career prospects, in line with the university's strategic vision.

To support the *Academic Career Framework*, the university developed an *Academic Performance Matrix* for each academic pathway to clarify specific performance expectations of each level across the university. These combined initiatives have assisted in driving transparency in claims for probation and promotion. As a result of the initiatives and persistent efforts by leadership to embed the frameworks, 40% of staff are now in teaching only roles and fewer in research only roles. The *Performance Matrix* supported by the *Research Performance Review and Planning* process has provided the university with a platform for a more directive approach to assessing the quality of research and determining the outcome of individual research workload applications.

Since the implementation of the *Academic Career Framework* and *Academic Performance Matrix*, the university has seen:

- marked improvement in ERA results
- the ability to quantify academic activities using activity-based costing and using this as an input to determine workforce requirements and workload allocation for staff
- increased number of promotions for staff that are teaching only
- improved international ranking

The changes to workload allocation continue to be reinforced by ACU leadership as integral to achieving the vision and strategy of the university. However, some hurdles still exist around challenging the sector wide perception of what it means to be an academic. This perception permeates the university and the ability of supervisors and line managers to align staff to the university's strategy.

## Case Study 8: Refining the role of the academic

For the University of Adelaide, the traditional 40/40/20 workload allocation model was a key enterprise bargaining issue in 2014 and 2017. The university wanted a differentiated definition of workload to dispel the notion that every academic needs to be the same to succeed, and to provide flexibility for the university and its staff. Coupled with this, the university identified an asymmetry that was geared towards recognising and rewarding research excellence ahead of teaching excellence.

To address the asymmetry and to reinforce a culture of teaching excellence that would benefit more students, the University of Adelaide created the *Education Academy* - a community of scholars consisting of academics who exemplify teaching excellence and provide educational leadership across

the institution. Members of the Academy agree to a change to their employment contract, accepting a teaching workload of between 61% and 90% and have access to a range of benefits including Learning and Teaching Advancement Grants, equal consideration for teaching-focused promotion and exclusive professional development opportunities. At present, there are approximately 75 academics in the Academy, with aspirations for the cohort to reach 100. The Academy creates a sense of value, respect and status for outstanding teachers, matching the status and profile of outstanding researchers.

The *Education Academy* has been key in supporting the professional development and progression of education specialists at the university, by:

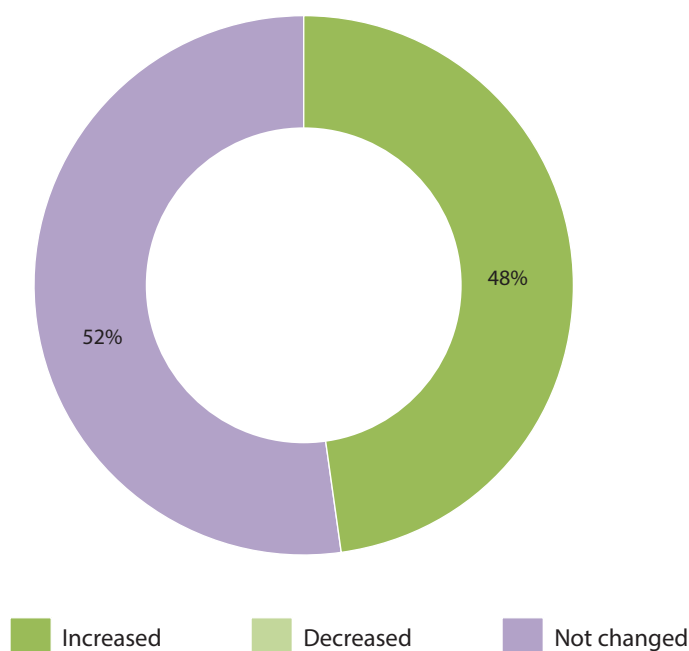
- building confidence in their capabilities to apply for and obtain promotions
- taking leadership roles in faculties and across the institution
- leading Communities of Practice
- involvement in peer reviewed teaching
- making significant contributions to institutional strategic initiatives such as curriculum renewal

The success of the Academy can be attributed to authentic leadership and the Academy's self-reinforcing culture premised on being a great educator.

### Hybrid academic/ professional roles

Approximately half of universities surveyed demonstrated an increase in the number of hybrid roles in the past four years, whilst the other half have seen no change (Figure 13). Hybrid roles can be defined as roles that merge academic and professional responsibilities. Learning developers & educational designers and professors of practice were the most commonly created hybrid role, indicating the value universities are placing on providing students with a quality learning experience as well as practical insight.

Figure 13: Change of proportion of staff in hybrid academic/ professional roles



## Academic work patterns

To accommodate student expectations for university offerings to be available when and where they want, universities are changing their academic work patterns and the ways they teach in various ways:

- 65% of universities have increased their online availability through the provision of lecture recordings, large format teaching and MOOCs to better cater for students, whether onshore, offshore or interstate.
- 41% of universities have incorporated teaching methods such as flipped classrooms and blended learning to better engage and interact with students.
- Delivery models such as transnational education and intensive blocks have also been accelerated and have experienced significant growth in some institutions.

To service changing academic work patterns, some universities are leveraging cohorts of staff in less traditional ways:

- With a decrease in face-to-face teaching time, one university is moving casual academics away from time spent teaching (which is what they have been traditionally employed for) towards more time spent on duties such as marking, student consultation and learning development activities.
- Another university is utilising sessional staff for facilitation of online programs, with full-time academics being used for on-campus teaching and as coordinators, as “online teaching is now considered more facilitation than traditional teaching delivery role”.

Of the 29 universities surveyed, 89% are utilising teaching periods beyond the traditional two 13-week semesters regime. Summer semesters are being used by 44% of universities and 31% have taken up trimester models. Other common learning models being introduced, which we expect will accelerate in the coming years, are intensive and block teaching modes.

Case Study 9 describes how Victoria University and the University of Adelaide have modernised the way they teach by introducing block learning and implementing a new digital learning platform called *Canvas*, respectively.





## Case Study 9: Looking at new ways to teach

In creating the *First Year College* at Victoria University, there was the opportunity to reconsider the pedagogy to better engage students in their learning. The resulting 'block' model of learning offers students an immersive and collaborative learning environment which is characterised by short bursts of learning, where students complete one four-week unit at a time before moving onto the next. Each unit involves newly designed and interactive learning techniques in small class sizes of up to 28. Complementary activities are also available for students to build on what is taught in face-to-face learning, with activities such as essay writing and maths being compulsory.

Learning designers were contracted to work with key academics in designing the new blocks and students with specific capabilities were also employed by the university to assist with the design and implementation processes. The designers not only looked at different ways that students could interact with information and how adults best

learn, but at the very nature of assessment. Collaboration and engagement across the workforce, particularly between academics and learning design teams has been integral to the block model's success.

Since its introduction, the model has facilitated the early identification of student problems which aids retention and improves pass rates as well as informing the delivery of more targeted and specific assistance programs. The block model has now been extended to undergraduate students of all levels and has served to change the heart of the university as it attracts different types of educators.

The University of Adelaide is another university rethinking the way that students learn and is the first university in Australia to adopt the digital learning platform, *Canvas*. The move to *Canvas* supports the university's shift towards engaging and collaborating with students in a digitally enabled way and was selected after staff and students

identified *Canvas* as the solution for modern learning and teaching. *Canvas* offers the traditional services delivered by learning platforms, but also offers new features that increase actionable insights through availability of learner behaviour data. The university's move to *Canvas* was made possible by a growing cohort of learning designers who are deployed to assist with curriculum design. The university also partnered with students to support the transformation from the previous Learning Management System to *Canvas*, with MyUni Ambassadors (now embedded into the Learning Support team as Learning Enhancement Officers) providing at-elbow support for academic staff and helping to transition over 3000 courses to *Canvas* in an 18-month period. At the same time *Echo360 ALP* automated lecture capture technology was deployed in all classrooms that accommodated more than 30 students, enabling automatic recording of lectures and manual creation of video.

### Utilising casual and fixed term staff

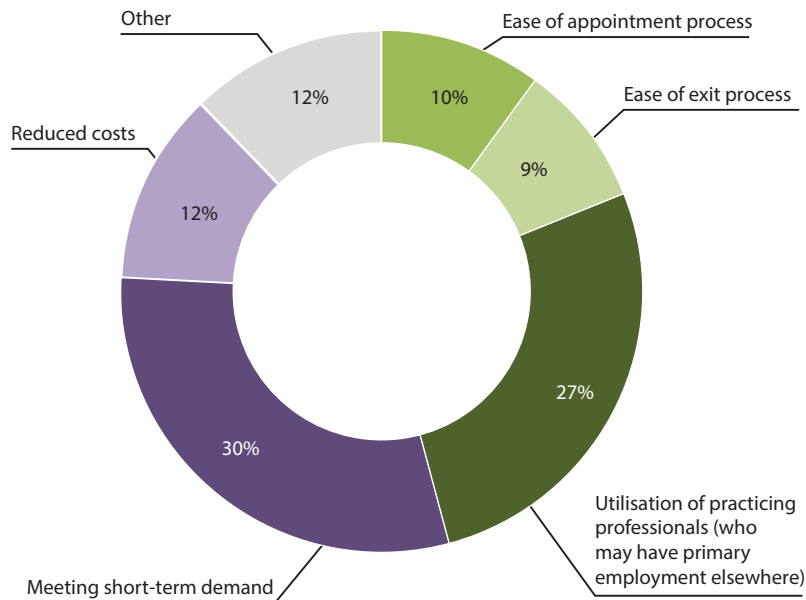
The main drivers for employing academic staff on a casual or fixed term basis are to meet short-term demand (30%) and to utilise practising professionals (27%), as depicted in Figure 14. Universities are also using these contract arrangements to enable flexibility to:

- respond to fluctuations in program demand/ seasonality
- meet the spread of work across different campuses

- respond to change and the unknown future (including programs and disciplines)
- employ staff for the duration of research grants (these are generally staff on fixed term arrangements)

Finite funding, enterprise agreement provisions around "tenure", and academic staff choosing to buy themselves out of teaching are also cited as reasons for engaging staff on casual and fixed term contracts.

Figure 14: Main drivers for employing academic staff on a casual or fixed term basis, as opposed to an ongoing basis

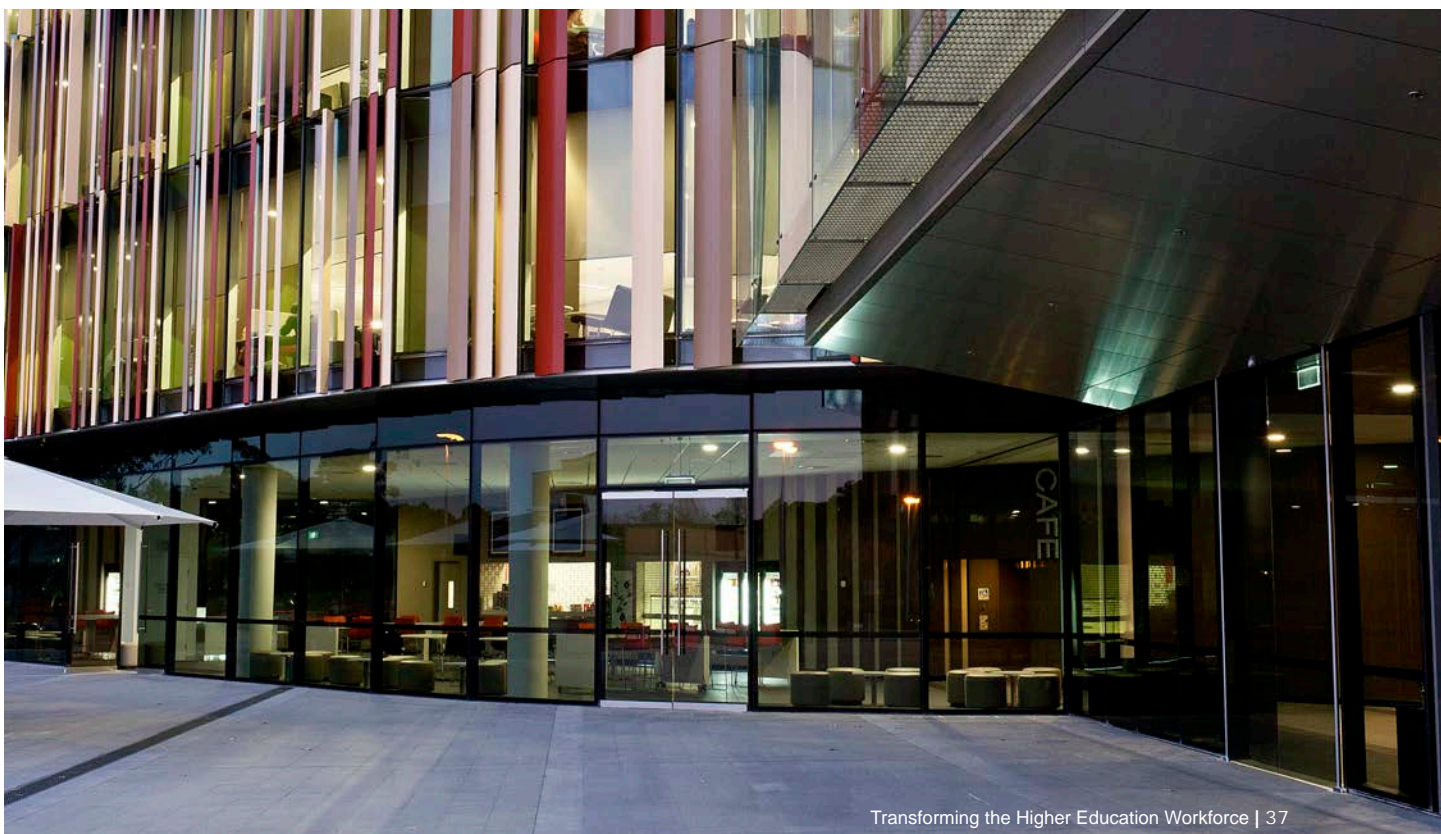


## Designing new roles

In order to operate in a collaborative, digitally enabled future environment, universities have created a number of new roles, including:

- educational designers (65% of universities)
- technology and data roles (37% of universities), including simulation technicians, learning analytics experts, web designers, data architects and senior leadership roles such as Director of Digital, Chief Data Officer and Chief Security Officer
- industry liaison roles (31% of universities), including work integrated learning supervisory positions, research partnership managers and innovation brokers

Going forward, universities will need to have the ability to understand changing skill requirements of the workforce and have the capability to design or augment roles accordingly.



# 3.6 WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

## Professional development, career pathways and performance management and reward

To support the changes brought about by workforce transformation initiatives and alterations to capabilities and structures of the workforce, it is imperative that universities change how they engage and manage the workforce through the engagement lifecycle.

Universities have refreshed and/or designed performance management and reward frameworks, career pathways and learning and development programs to varying degrees for different cohorts of staff. Whilst universities place heavy reliance on their casual workforces, Figure 15 suggests that universities are more focused on engaging professional and academic staff employed on a permanent or fixed term basis. If universities are to continue utilising casuals as a core segment of their workforce, particular attention needs to be given to role expectations and provision of support and development, so that universities can maintain a consistent, high quality student experience.

Although there has been progress in defining career pathways within universities, universities can also benefit from considering how they can augment career pathways to promote the movement of staff into and out of the sector. Universities should be encouraging staff to seek practical experience to enhance their theoretical teaching and research without the move operating as a risk to career progression.

Figure 15: Number of universities that have refreshed and/or designed performance management and reward frameworks, career pathways and learning and development programs for professional, academic and casual staff

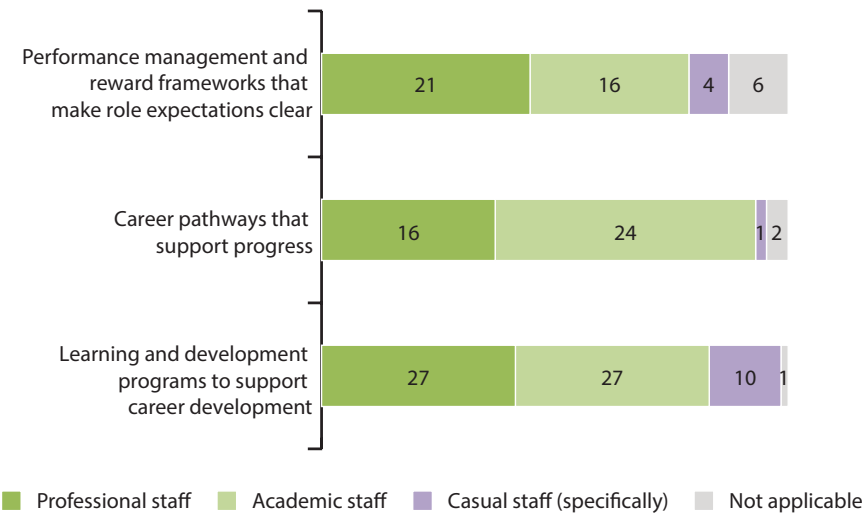




Table 7 outlines examples of what actions universities have undertaken to successfully refresh and/or design performance management and reward frameworks, career pathways and learning and development programs.

Table 7: Examples of what universities have undertaken to successfully refresh and/or design performance management and reward frameworks, career pathways and learning and development programs

Category	Examples
<b>Performance management and reward frameworks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of a new approach to performance conversations and meaningful career development (i.e. not a tick and flick system).</li> <li>• Update of promotion and probation policies.</li> <li>• Integration of university values in performance management and reward frameworks.</li> <li>• Introduction of performance management software to support performance management processes.</li> <li>• Implementation of academic benchmarks.</li> <li>• Redesign of performance management framework to focus on performance for outcomes.</li> <li>• Creation of reward incentives to cater for different cohorts of staff and teams (e.g. VC Professional Staff Development Scholarships, Staff Postgraduate Coursework Study Scholarships, Professional Staff Conference, Senior Women's Conference, HEA Fellowship Scheme).</li> <li>• Refreshment of remuneration approach for non-EA staff to shift to performance-based remuneration.</li> </ul>
<b>Career pathways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of academic job families to encourage academic staff to focus on areas of strength and interest (Teaching and Leadership, Industry and Commercial).</li> <li>• Internal job advertisements and project secondment opportunities to encourage staff to work in different areas of the university.</li> <li>• Development of academic and professional capability frameworks.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning and development programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deployment of just-in-time training.</li> <li>• Implementation of blended learning modules tailored for professional staff, academic staff and leaders.</li> <li>• Development of bespoke leadership programs for senior, middle and emerging leaders.</li> <li>• Implementation of other learning initiatives for professional and academic staff (e.g. professional staff development programs, career expos, digital capability uplift programs, People Management Essentials, Agile Ways of Working, cultural capability programs).</li> <li>• Deployment of a new Learning Management System.</li> <li>• Introduction of two dedicated professional development weeks which is built into EA workload principles (requiring a minimum of 40 hours per year).</li> <li>• Development of specialist advisory groups to design specialist training for staff (e.g. Digital Literacy Advisory group to embed digital literacy in learning and the Respect Now Always advisory group to design training aimed at preventing sexual assault and improving staff wellbeing).</li> </ul>

One university that has recently focused its efforts on providing clarity on academic performance expectations is the Queensland University of Technology (Case Study 10).



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## Case Study 10: Providing clarity on performance

The Queensland University of Technology developed the *Academic Career Framework* to provide clarity on academic work expectations at different career stages. The framework replaces a plethora of policies and criteria with an inclusive and simplified enterprise level framework that sets out benchmarks of achievement in each academic domain and at each academic level. The framework is starting to be used across all faculties and institutes in early 2020.

The framework is intended to be adopted across HR processes including job design, recruitment and selection, probation, performance planning and review and academic promotion to ensure alignment and consistency in the framework's use across the academic lifecycle.

A leader-led approach was employed to develop the framework, which included extensive consultation and co-creation with stakeholders

across the university. This enabled greater ownership of the framework and ensures it reflects the diversity of the institution. Early insights from staff indicate the framework is being viewed as a welcome change that will provide a single point of reference for performance planning, making staff feel more empowered to navigate their careers.

### Mobility

With the higher education workforce being globally mobile, utilising offshore talent is business as usual and part of the talent acquisition strategy for many universities. Engagement of the global workforce is facilitated through international partnerships and the establishment of offshore campuses, which allow for greater access to global talent and facilitate the movement of staff.

### Diversity of contracts and academic pipeline

Universities acknowledge the boost that industry professionals provide for program delivery enhanced by contemporary best practice and professional insights. There is, however, a mixed level of industry preparedness to release practitioners for short-term roles. The obstacles that stand in the way of staff exchanges between universities and industry include:

- disparity in pay and working conditions
- enterprise agreement employment restrictions and workload expectations
- terms of contracts that compromise or adversely affect desired outcomes
- transfer of entitlements
- higher accreditation standards and accrediting body requirements
- lack of common goals and common language
- lack of clear shared understanding as to what success looks like for both parties
- regional locations of universities limiting the possibility of staff exchanges

One university that has had success with staff movement with industry has used a multi-faceted approach:

*"Our Clinical and Professional Practice Scholar model provides a lever for industry practitioners to take up positions within the university and our tiered approach to work integrated learning provides further opportunity from providing guest lectures, to full placement with the university for a period of time. Our on-campus clinics (e.g. Psychology, Legal, Chiropractic) provide industry practitioners with the opportunity to provide outreach services to community, as well as a contribution to teaching our students during placement with clinics. We also utilise our sessional pool to supplement and augment our permanent workforce and to provide scalable access to industry practitioners."*



Health science has been highlighted as a discipline area that has successfully facilitated exchanges of staff between universities and industry. Other examples of successful secondment arrangements have included:

- Seconding academics to:
  - government and government agencies (e.g. CSIRO) in a research capacity in areas such as oceans and fisheries, social innovation, environment, asset management, defence and health
  - professional services firms (e.g. seconding an academic to KPMG to partner with industry in South East Asia around auditing skills)

- Seconding industry practitioners from:
  - multinational resources organisations to work with academics and government on joint ventures
  - state government bodies to provide subject matter expertise on areas such as work health and safety
  - architecture industries to act as Industry Fellows

The movement of staff into and out of the sector is expected to increase due to the importance placed by universities on having the ability to provide students with practical insights and experience. As such, we expect universities will develop role requirements that recognise practitioners with practical experience as well as traditional academic pre-service backgrounds.

## 4. WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Our survey results reveal that promising progress has taken place in workforce reform across the higher education sector over the past four years. There has been a positive cultural shift towards staff embracing change and some encouraging examples of how leaders have successfully led change. The number and breadth of completed workforce transformation initiatives demonstrate that universities are changing to differentiate themselves and to realise opportunities across workforce capability, structure and engagement.

Whilst the progress to date has been encouraging, a sustained momentum is required so that universities can remain agile in an ever-changing environment. In doing so, the obstacles and challenges outlined in this report will need to be discussed and explored further.

The next phase of the *Transforming the Higher Education Workforce* project will be an opportunity for university leaders to collaborate on how the sector might address the

obstacles and challenges raised in this report. This will involve consideration of future workforce scenarios and encompass different levels of knowledge and sectoral perspectives. In undertaking the next phase, some areas for consideration might include how universities go about:

- Addressing pockets of change fatigue and change resistance and developing mitigation action plans to increase the likelihood of successful change programs.
- Building on the investment in leadership development initiatives to further support leaders for future success (e.g. how to lead authentically, how to foster an inclusive culture, understanding immunity to change concepts and how to empower and develop others).

- Leveraging data to make proactive and precise data driven decisions about the workforce and future workforce requirements.
- Learning from institutions that have been able to effectively navigate the industrial environment.

Addressing the obstacles, challenges and above areas of consideration will assist universities to identify the best path forward to achieve their strategic priorities and potential opportunities for sectoral collaboration.

# APPENDIX A

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

Select your role:

- ☐ Vice-Chancellor
- ☐ Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Corporate (or equivalent)
- ☐ Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic (or equivalent)
- ☐ Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research (or equivalent)
- ☐ Deputy Vice-Chancellor, International (or equivalent)
- ☐ Head of HR (or equivalent)
- ☐ Other

**Cultural shift:** The next section of the survey aims to measure the cultural shift towards embracing change at the University in the last three to four years.

The University's workforce has positively shifted towards embracing change.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not applicable



Provide examples of strategies or approaches used to positively shift the University’s culture towards embracing and/or championing change (e.g. investing in leaders and staff to build change management capability and capacity, building leadership capability to lead through change and transition, engaging the workforce to foster high-performance communication and collaborative behaviour).

**Workforce transformation projects/initiatives:** The next section of the survey aims to understand the significant workforce transformation projects/initiatives the University has completed in the last three to four years.

List the most significant workforce transformation projects/ initiatives the University has completed that have led to major advances across workforce structure, workforce capability and workforce engagement.

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For each of the significant workforce transformation projects/ initiatives listed in the previous question, what were the most important workforce benefits realised?

	Increased workforce capacity	Capability uplift	Efficient workforce structures	Reduced costs
Workforce transformation project/ initiative 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workforce transformation project/ initiative 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workforce transformation project/ initiative 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workforce transformation project/ initiative 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workforce transformation project/ initiative 5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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For each of the significant workforce transformation projects/ initiatives, what was unique about the approach that led to realisation of benefits?

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For each of the significant workforce transformation projects/ initiatives, list the most difficult challenges the University faced and what was done to overcome or manage them.

**Obstacles:** The next section of the survey aims to identify the obstacles the University has encountered in relation to achieving strategic workforce objectives in the last three to four years.

To what extent has a deficiency in any of the following internal factors had a negative impact on achieving the University's strategic workforce objectives:

	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low	None
Capability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Capacity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff mindset and behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enterprise Agreements(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

List any other internal factors that could be considered as having a high or very high negative impact on the University achieving its strategic workforce objectives.

What external factors have had a negative impact on achieving the University's strategic workforce objectives (e.g. government regulation, policy and funding)?

What factors have been the main drivers for change at the University (e.g. student expectations and needs, employer expectations and needs, technological change)?

The following sections of the survey aim to measure progress against the workforce dimensions set out in the 2016 Australian Higher Education Workforce of the Future Report. The three workforce dimensions are workforce capability, workforce structure and workforce engagement.

**Workforce capability:** The next section of the survey aims to identify progress in relation to workforce capability at the University in the last three to four years. Workforce capability refers to the skills, experience and behaviours required of University leaders and the workforce to deliver on strategic workforce objectives.

University leaders have led successfully through complex change.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Not applicable

Provide examples of how University leaders have led successful change.

University leaders have led successfully through complex change.

- ☐ Only incidentally
- ☐ Noticeably
- ☐ Significantly
- ☐ Decreased
- ☐ Unsure

List the academic discipline areas where practical and/or industry experience will be needed in the future.

To what extent has a deficiency in any of the following internal factors had a negative impact on achieving the University’s strategic workforce objectives:

	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Advanced technological skills to optimise digital potential	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expert facilitation and delivery of experiential learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academics with teaching and learning expertise that have the capability to move between sub-disciplines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analytical skills to improve data driven decision making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Has the university workforce become more adept at change (e.g. less resistant; better able to take on new roles)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Provide examples to support your answer to the question above.

Have there been improvements in communication and collaboration between different groups of staff (e.g. academic and professional staff; different academic disciplines, cross-campus collaborations)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Provide examples to support your answer to the question above.



Is the University workforce more engaged with industry and the broader community?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Provide examples to support your answer to the question above.

Workforce structure: The next section of the survey aims to identify progress in relation to workforce structure at the University in the last three to four years. Workforce structure refers to the design of new and existing roles to better meet the requirements of the University.

What proportion of academic staff are in the following roles:

	0-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%
Teaching focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balanced focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Provide examples of hybrid academic/ professional roles the University has created in the last three to four years.

In the last three to four years the proportion of hybrid academic/ professional roles at the University has:

- ☐ Increased
- ☐ Decreased
- ☐ Not changed

\_\_\_\_\_

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- ☐ Ease of appointment process
- ☐ Ease of exit process
- ☐ Utilisation of practicing professionals (who may have primary employment elsewhere)
- ☐ Meeting short-term demand
- ☐ Reducing costs
- ☐ Other

The University has refreshed and/or designed

	Professional staff	Academic staff	Casual staff (specifically)	Not applicable
Learning and development programs to support career development for:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career pathways that support progress for:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performance management and reward frameworks that make role expectations clear for:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Provide examples of what the University has done to successfully refresh and/or design:

- Learning and development programs
- Career pathways
- Performance management and reward frameworks.

How would you describe the preparedness of industry to release practitioners for short-term university roles, and what obstacles stand in the way of staff exchanges between universities and industry?

Provide examples of successful secondments of academics to industry appointments and vice versa.

Provide examples of how the University has utilised offshore academic talent to supplement or replace its core onshore workforce.





