



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA**

Electronic Submission  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Massey University

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To the New Zealand Productivity Commission

**Executive summary**

The CoHSS at Massey University is responding innovatively to the challenges of demographic change and an increasingly digitalised world. In particular the following should be noted:

- there is a growing number of tertiary qualified working professionals who will need to access ongoing learning and development. Professional learning and development, retraining and enabling students to combine study with work and other commitments are a priority for the well-being of New Zealand and its communities. We therefore remain steadfast in our investment in education delivery to learners independent of their location, whether they choose to study full or part-time, on a campus, online or from a remote location
- Massey University engages with employers and accrediting organisations through regular cycles of assessment as well as through focused surveys when we are refreshing our qualification offer. In addition internships and professional practice papers connect students, teachers and employers
- “Soft” or transferable skills that are a keystone of the Arts qualifications are noted by employers nationally and internationally as desirable skill sets
- Trends around internationalisation and global citizenship call for the disciplinary and skills competencies that Arts students are receiving
- Digital educational resources are a central part of delivery, interaction and literacy development for both internal and distance students. Innovative delivery allows a diverse range of students to be involved in further tertiary education.

At Massey University, and in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, we continually scan the environment in order to translate social, political and economic trends into localised action for the benefit of our communities – whether they be students, staff, employers, or our local, regional, national and international partners.

We recognise that the environment in which we operate is dynamic, and we seek to respond to changes in ways that are appropriate to an organisation that prioritises research and enterprise, teaching and learning, connections, internationalisation, responsibility, generating income and enabling excellence<sup>1</sup>. We therefore welcome the discussion of new models for tertiary education and the opportunity to engage in the conversation.

Accepting that the Commission will receive numerous submissions on matters of import within disciplines and Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs), as well as across sub-sectors and the sector at large, we have chosen to focus this submission on particular contextual trends, namely: Demography and the Labour Market; Internationalisation and Global Citizenship; and Digital Futures. In each case we have provided examples of our we have responded, thereby indicating the ways in which innovation is currently occurring within at least one TEO. In order to facilitate the processing and analysis of this submission, we have identified particular questions within the Commission's Report to which our observations align.

### **Demography and the Labour Market [Questions 17, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36]**

The New Zealand population is reported as well-educated, with 39% of 25-64 year olds and 46% of 25-34 year olds having attained a university degree<sup>2</sup>. Consequently there is, and will be, a growing number of tertiary qualified working professionals who will need to access ongoing learning and development (Continuous Education and Training). When combined with prolonged working lives and changing labour markets, the demand for lifelong education and training will increase. In this context, professional learning and development, retraining and enabling students to combine study with work and other commitments are a priority for the well-being of New Zealand and its communities. We therefore remain steadfast in our investment in education delivery to learners independent of their location, whether they choose to study full or part-time, on a campus, online or from a remote location.

We also accept that current strategies continue to focus on younger students and we are addressing their needs with the greater use of applied and experiential learning, and through the recognition of informal learning. Indeed, given the diversity of learners within New Zealand and across the globe, there may be a case for greater diversity and differentiation across TEOs. One size will not fit all.

*Q 17: In what ways and to what extent do employers interact with tertiary providers in New Zealand?*

Employers and accrediting organisations have input into the development and quality assurance of Psychology qualifications (e.g. Industrial Organisation and Clinical Psychology) as well as the Bachelors' and Masters of Resource and Environmental Planning. Internships

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<sup>1</sup> Massey University Strategic Plan, The Road to 2025

<sup>2</sup> OECD. (2013). Education at a Glance 2013. Country Note, New Zealand

and professional practice papers are also opportunities for employers to interact with universities.

The core curriculum recently introduced into the Bachelor of Arts (BA) at Massey University was substantially informed by input from employers. Three aspects of these changes speak to the ways in which interactions between employers and tertiary providers might be pursued.

- In the programme design phase, the views of employers were solicited (particularly in the lower North Island/Wellington region)—with the assistance of Business New Zealand—on a range of matters (e.g., skills likely to be in demand in the future; value of transferable skills).
- Consistent with the call for stronger links between tertiary providers and employers [Issues Paper, p. 20], the organisational arrangements designed to support Massey’s new model BA provides for an institutional ‘champion’ for the programme, one of whose responsibilities is to foster relations with employers. The arrangements also include digital and physical student engagement spaces in which BA students can engage with external interests.
- A new capstone paper designed for first delivery in 2017, will provide BA students with the opportunity to engage critically with issues relevant to employers in the public and private spheres.

*Q 31: What other evidence is there about the influence of tertiary education system performance on graduate income premia in New Zealand?*

A report recently compiled by Universities New Zealand<sup>3</sup> provides data regarding graduate income. As educators in Arts and Social Science qualifications, and in the context of a rapidly changing world of work (as recognised in Q 32), we think two findings are of particular interest: (a) only 2-3% of Arts graduates are unemployed three years after graduation, which is very low; and (b) 90% of Arts graduates are in work that is degree-relevant (e.g. planning, policy, management or teaching roles). These findings provide evidence in support of the resilience and relevance of the Arts qualifications within the university-subsector.

*Q 32: To what extent are graduates meeting employers’ expectations with respect to hard or technical skills? What about soft skills and capabilities?; Q 33: What are the significant trends in employer demand for tertiary-educated employees, and in student demand for tertiary education? How is the system responding?; Q 35: What are the implications of new technologies that are predicted to make many currently valuable skills obsolete? Will this change the role of the tertiary education system?*

The data cited immediately above reflect changing patterns in employers’ demand for labour, and in particular, that soft, or transferable, skills are critical in the current and future labour market. In addition to the skills associated with the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) disciplines, there is compelling evidence that employers are also increasingly looking for graduates with skills that are embedded, implicitly and explicitly, in Arts qualifications. For instance:

- A longitudinal study of more than 11,000 Oxford Humanities graduates who matriculated between 1960–1989 found that 40% of graduates gained employment in the management, finance and law sectors. Education was the largest single destination

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<sup>3</sup> Universities New Zealand/Te Pokai Tara. (2016). A Degree is a smart investment.

for graduates (25.8%), with employment in the media/literature/arts (11.4%), legal (11.3%) and finance (10.4%) sectors<sup>4</sup>.

- A 2013 Report by the UK Campaign for Social Sciences found that 3.5 years after graduating, the proportion of social science and Arts/Humanities graduates in employment is higher (at 84.2% and 78.2% respectively) than STEM subjects (77.8%). Moreover, most social science graduates worked in the professional sector: '7 in 10 social scientists are in 'professional' or 'associate-professional and technical' occupations within 3.5 years of graduating'<sup>5</sup>.

More specifically, the international literature indicates that employers value:

- effective communication skills (written, verbal and interpersonal);
- specific disciplinary knowledge (signalled by an appropriate qualification);
- critical reasoning, problem-solving and analytical skills;
- flexible and adaptable thinkers;
- evidence of a well-rounded individual (including participation in intra- and extra-curricular activities);
- the ability to analyse and solve complex problems;
- the ability to locate, organise, and evaluate information from multiple sources.

Those imperatives are also evident in New Zealand. For example, much of the language concerning skills in the present Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) is that of transferability and flexible adaptation to changing labour market conditions. Specifically, government is looking to the sector to develop the skills to:

*"communicate well, process information effectively, think logically and critically and adapt to future changes. They are increasingly required in all workplaces. Obtaining and developing transferable skills is one of the most crucial outcomes of tertiary study, including within generalist areas of study as well as vocation-specific qualifications"* (TES 2014-19:10).

Similar sentiments were expressed by many of the employers we surveyed while developing our bespoke BA core curriculum in the refreshed BA. Consistent with the international evidence cited above, when participants were asked what sorts of skills, knowledge and attributes they looked for, the most frequently cited transferable skills were:

- critical thinking
- writing
- oral / communication
- research

Moreover, just over 44% of 287 respondents to the question: 'How relevant is today's BA for today's business needs?' believed the degree is either relevant (34.5%) or very relevant (10.1%). As an aside, only 10.4% of respondents indicated that the degree is either not relevant (9.4%) or completely irrelevant (1%). The reasons given by those who said that a BA is relevant to today's business environment include that:

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<sup>4</sup> Oxford University. 2013. Humanities Graduates and the British Economy: The Hidden Impact, July, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Campaign for Social Science, 2013. What Do Social Science Graduates Do? October, pp. 3, 5.

- '[i]t is important that potential employees have a broad knowledge base and, more importantly, open and positive dispositions to learning and using knowledge in innovative ways';
- '[i]t provides employers with staff who are able to think critically rather than simply accept what is in front of them';
- '[i]f we are to believe that knowledge is moving and changing so quickly I would suggest we need people who are critical thinkers and multi-taskers. These attributes I see more readily in an arts graduate as opposed to a more specialist degree.'

In short, the skills traditionally associated with the BA are in demand from employers. However, we are unsure of the extent to which this is understood in the wider public domain, particularly given the extent to which 'induced demand' (Issues Paper, p. 48) in New Zealand tends to reflect a dominant narrative focusing on technical skills. This is of some concern to us, not least given that 72% of the national GDP comprises activity in the services sector, where 'performance improvement ... relies on the acquisition, manipulation and application of information' (Issues Paper, p. 52). STEM-related skills are clearly necessary, but the evidence increasingly points to the importance of supplementing 'hard' technical skills with 'soft' cognitive and social skills – including for example ethical and identity-based competencies.

At Massey University, we have designed a bespoke, inter-disciplinary core curriculum for the BA around these transferable skills. The relevant parts of our curriculum reforms are as follows:

- i. two papers at the 100-level focusing on critical thinking and writing and inquiry; and
- ii. a suite of three integrated papers, stair-casing from the first to the third year of the degree, designed around the attributes and activities of active citizenship. These courses are designed in direct response to the mounting awareness of the importance of cross-cultural competency, social intelligence and sense-making to work in an increasingly globalised world<sup>6</sup>. They are also consistent with the sentiments of the MacCormick quote noted in the Commission's Issues Paper: 'in a knowledge-based and globalising economy, distinctions between the skills needed for economic productivity and the broader benefits of education are largely false distinctions. The attributes of highly skilled and productive workers are essentially the same as those of *confident, creative, culturally enriched good citizens*' (p. 29; emphasis added).
- iii. in conjunction with a revised graduate profile, this core curriculum is designed to clearly demonstrate the skills, attributes and competencies that a BA provides.

*Q 36: What challenges and opportunities do demographic changes present for the tertiary education system?*

As indicated previously, the aging population and the frequently articulated need to have a workforce that can respond to changing technology presents challenges in a context that privileges younger students who are able to study full time. Life-long learning, professional education and upskilling around technology and soft skills are clearly needed. However if measures of 'success' continue to neglect an adequate consideration of the needs of diverse

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<sup>6</sup> Institute for the Future, Future Work Skills 2020. Institute for the Future, University of Phoenix. <http://www.itft.org>

learners studying off-campus, online and when their schedules permit, future innovations will be impeded.

### **Internationalisation & Global Citizenship (Question 44)**

The Leadership Statement for International Education<sup>7</sup> continues to provide a useful summary of the context with the number of international students expected to grow, and to increasingly form part of New Zealand's migrant pool. According to the OECD<sup>8</sup>, policies and practices that accelerate the rate of global integration (e.g. via migration, multi-lateral trade, investment in research and development) will become more commonplace. Consequently, the humanities and social sciences will have an essential role in contributing to cultural competencies, including contextual awareness, languages and understanding people and their place in the world. This is affirmed by the Economist Intelligence Unit<sup>9</sup> who identified key skills for a global market as disciplinary expertise, communications, technology, critical thinking, foreign language fluency and understanding of international, environmental and social issues.

### **Digital Futures (Questions 35, 43)**

Digital developments—especially open education resources—are a feature of our teaching, learning and research environment. More generally, use of the internet for economic transactions, service delivery and social activities is pervasive. As a tertiary provider, we are increasingly looking toward cloud services and 'big data' that can drive improvement in teaching, learning and student engagement. Digital literacies are now a fundamental, but relatively under explored competency underpinning our work, play and interaction. Indeed, the latest report from the Higher Education Commission in the United Kingdom<sup>10</sup> examines the responsible use of big data for the improvement of learning. Similarly, strategies for data management and informed consent require urgent examination, as do issues of privacy protection, equitable access to information, and ethical information use. The points have also been observed in the outcomes of the New Zealand Digital Futures Forum<sup>11</sup>.

We welcome the challenges that these advances present for the content, structure and delivery of formal university qualifications. As access to open content increases, so too does our commitment to engender a culture of critical reasoning and awareness. As noted by the New Media Consortium "*educating learners how to decipher credible resources and aggregate content has become imperative*" (NMC Horizon Report, p. 8<sup>12</sup>).

As a large College within New Zealand's leading tertiary provider of distance education, we submit that this form of education provision is most likely to utilise the challenges and

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<sup>7</sup> New Zealand Government. (2011). *Leadership Statement for International Education*.

<sup>8</sup> Braconier, H., Nicoletti, G. & Westmoer, B. (2014). *Policy Challenges for the next 50 Years*. OECD Economic Policy Paper, No. 9. <http://www.oecd.org/eco/lookingto2060.htm>

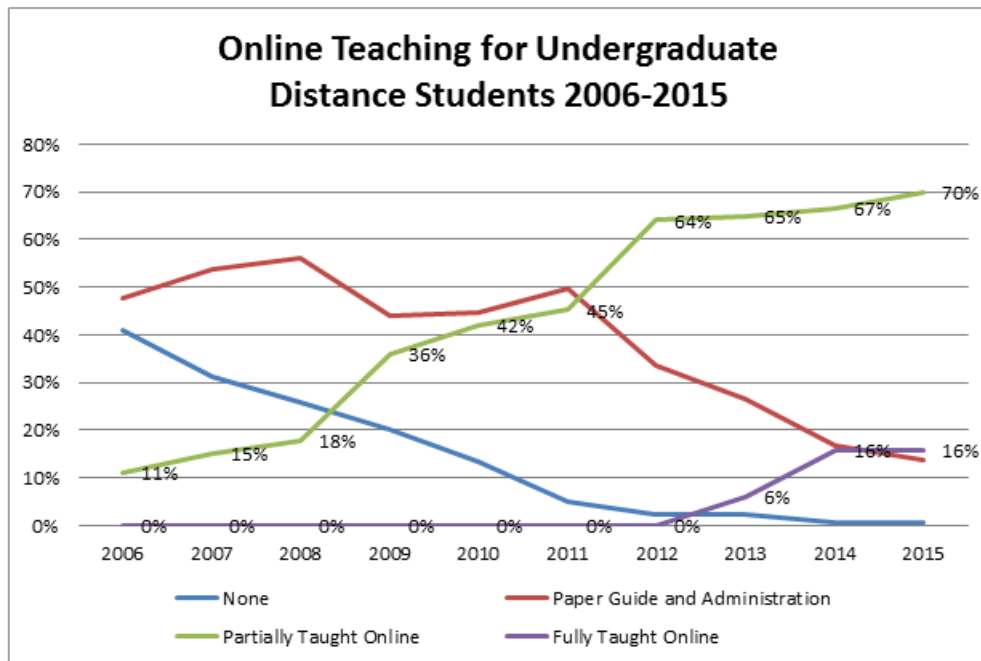
<sup>9</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit. (2008). *The future of higher education: How technology will shape learning*. Report sponsored by the New Media Consortium.

<sup>10</sup> Shacklock, X. (2016). *From Bricks to Clicks. The Potential of Data and Analytics in Higher Education*. Higher Education Commission: United Kingdom.

<sup>11</sup> New Zealand Digital Futures Forum Discussion Documents available at <https://www.nzdatafutures.org.nz/discussion-documents>

<sup>12</sup> NMC Horizon. (2013). *NMC Horizon Report 2013 Higher Education Edition*. New Media Consortium.

opportunities presented by new technologies. When Massey University first adopted WebCT as the University’s Learning Management System in 1997, many humanities and social sciences staff were quick to see the opportunities for using tools such as discussion boards and chat rooms as a way of both developing peer-to-peer and student-teacher relationships, and for delivering real time tutorial opportunities for distance students. The following table depicts the growth in larger proportions of online delivery in distance teaching within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.



Massey University’s move to the Virtual Learning System Moodle (internally labelled as ‘Stream’) in 2009 provided the opportunity for the inclusion of other electronic tools<sup>13</sup>. For example, Adobe Connect to enable students from different locations to interact in a shared audio-visual learning space. This has been widely used in language papers, where the ability to actually *practise* the language learned is critical, and in higher-level papers, to facilitate in-depth discussions among students. In another example from the Classics, academic and professional staff developed an interactive iPad app to enable distance students to explore the Tanya Jermaine Collection of authentic ancient Greek vase reproductions.

In the wake of the new BA Core Curriculum, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is developing courses that are specifically designed for online delivery (as opposed to being adapted for online delivery), and to be studied on a range of digital devices, as well as on more traditional personal computers. New paper design in some papers has learning materials structured into ‘bite-size’ pieces that can be studied in as little as 30 minutes. This type of approach is particularly supportive of distance learners, many of whom experience limitations in terms of the time and places in which they can complete their studies. In addition, each of the learning activities includes quizzes or other ways in which students can assess their own learning, and an online discussion tool that allows them to discuss the material at the point they are studying it. Future plans include making aspects of these courses available for free, in accordance with the trends around open education resources.

<sup>13</sup> Including Scenario Based Learning Interactive, Wimba Voice tools, MyPortfolio.

Massey University's status as the only New Zealand University with three campuses and a fourth virtual, or distance campus, has been the impetus for trialling new ways of connecting students and teachers across these spaces. Mediasite – live streaming and video-captured internal lectures provide distance students with the opportunity to be part of lectures both synchronously and asynchronously. Another example of increased connectivity across space is provided through the delivery method of some specialisations within the new 180 credit Masters of Arts through 'blended' offerings on the Auckland and Manawatu campuses with the distance offering. By combining the Virtual Learning System 'Stream' (as a spine for delivery of, and interaction with content) with video-linked classrooms and desktop-based tools, we are bringing students and teachers together in ways that support efficiency in delivery and quality enhancement, while giving students experience of the sorts of digitally mediated communication that are increasingly common. Students enrolled in the Institute of Education are also connected across cohort groups and thus are given the opportunity to experience part of a community of learners wherever they live.

We trust that you will find our comments and observations of value in the context of the process that is being undertaken. Thank you for your consideration of this submission. We look forward to further discussions about possible outcomes.

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