

International Dimensions of the Australian Academic Profession

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Introduction

This paper provides insight into the international dimensions of the Australian academic profession. Australia has one of the most internationalised higher education student populations in the world, which leads us naturally to inquire into the international characteristics of its academic staff. It is important to consider, for instance, whether the academic workforce has internationalised in the same way as the student body, and how academic staff are responding educationally to various opportunities and challenges arising from internationalisation.

Yet to date relatively little is known about this aspect of higher education in Australia. In future analyses, historians are likely to see ‘internationalisation’, broadly conceived, as one of the greatest change forces in contemporary Australian higher education. It is vital, therefore, that further analysis is undertaken, both to descriptively document current practice and to provide an evidence base for guiding change in policy and practice.

Our main source of evidence for the current analysis is the Australian Changing Academic Profession (CAP) 2007 data (Coates, Goedegebuure, van

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der Lee & Meek, 2008). Relevant additional information is used to better contextualise this data. It should be emphasised that the current analysis is necessarily preliminary as the national and international data-set is still being verified. Accordingly, no overall international comparisons are made as we await the availability of the full international CAP data-set.

The discussion is straightforward. We start by providing an overview of the international composition of the Australian academic workforce. Following this, we focus on research and research-related activities. We finish our discussion by elaborating on the nature of internationalisation in the Australian classroom, *i.e.* how teaching has been influenced by the increased internationalisation over the last 15 years.

In presenting our analysis, we offer more in depth analyses by breaking results down by institutional grouping, discipline, rank and age. Where possible, we attempt a longitudinal analysis through incorporating the outcomes of the earlier Carnegie study (Sheehan, Welch & Lacy, 1996). However, given the relative lack of attention to the international dimension in this prior work, a telling insight in itself, this attempt has proved to be fairly unsuccessful.

Australian academic staff: an international mix

The first matter to address when examining the international dimensions of the Australian academic profession is to consider how international the workforce really is. The 1993 Carnegie study (Sheehan *et al.*, 1996) showed that at that time Australia was one of the more internationalised higher education systems. It used the place of origin of the respondents highest earned degree as a proxy measure of internationalisation, which showed that some 20% of Australian academics had earned their highest degree in another country, with the United States (44%) and the United Kingdom (26%) being the main providers. This finding corresponds to earlier results which indicated that in 1986, 25% of Australian academic staff had been recruited from overseas.

The 2007 survey included a number of variables that can be used as proxies for the international composition of the academic profession: country of birth, country of first degree, country of second degree and country of doctoral degree, and current citizenship. None of these are exact indicators, of course. In an immigrant country like Australia, being born overseas can mean that the respondents parents came to Australia and that the respondent grew up in the country and is as much Australian as someone who was born in Australia. It can also mean the respondent came to Australia to take up an academic position.

Similar arguments apply to the country of degree. However, triangulation of the data allows for a fairly reliable picture of the international composition of the academic profession.

When we look at citizenship at birth, 38% of CAP 2007 respondents were born outside Australia, with a large proportion of these being born either in the United Kingdom (13.5%), the United States (3.5%), New Zealand (3.5%), China (2%) and South Africa (1.5%) (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Citizenship at birth

At the time of their first degree, 69% of the respondents were Australians, while currently 88% of the respondents indicate Australian citizenship. As to their first degree, 73% of academics obtained this in Australia. For their second degree, 70% indicated that this was from Australia, while 73% hold an Australian doctorate. By far the most common foreign countries for overseas degrees are the United Kingdom (9% first degree, 9% second degree and 10% doctorate) and the United States (4% first degree, 7% second degree and 6% doctorate).

These results indicate that the Australian academic profession has remained quite international in its composition over the last 15 years. Contrary to the 1993 data, the dominance of the United States as a contributing foreign country has diminished, but the expected replacement of the US and the UK as the ‘delivering countries’ for academic staff by Asian countries (Sheehan *et al.*, 1996) has not come about.

The 1993 study argues that “[T]he extent of internationalisation in Australian academe has been sustained, in part, by the relative attractiveness of Australian academic salaries and conditions” (Sheehan *et al.*, 1996, p.106). The report questions the sustainability of this: “The relative decline of Australian

academic salaries over the last 15 years or so, however, together with perceived deterioration in working conditions, suggests Australia may now be a rather less attractive venue for academic staff” (Sheehan *et al.*, 1996, p.106). Results from the 2007 study do not support this suggestion. As reported earlier (Coates *et al.*, 2008), while Australian academics continue to believe that their working conditions have deteriorated, this appears not to have affected its international attractiveness if we look at the international composition of the profession.

Although we have yet to analyse the international CAP data-set in terms of salary levels, other research would suggest that Australian academics still do quite well in terms of remuneration. A study undertaken by the Association of Commonwealth Universities shows Australian academics leading comparator countries Canada, the UK and New Zealand and indicates a strong increase in salary levels when comparing 2006-2007 to 2004-2005 (Kubler & Lennon, 2007) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Academic salaries 2006-07 compared to 2004-05

	Australia		Canada		UK		NZ	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Lecturer	66,196	17	59,037	19	46,921	-6	43,983	14
Senior Lecturer	79,696	17			59,118	-4	57,632	14
Associate professor	93,564	16	74,410	3	71,147		69,929	15
Professor	114,555	17	74,513	9	77,756	16	74,996	14

A recent study commissioned by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors Committee (2008) paints a similar picture. Table 2 shows adjusted (purchasing power parity weighted) results for five countries. Note that the Australian sample is for Group of Eight (Go8) institutions¹ only, and that the US estimates are a conservative perspective – they are for 9-10 month contracts and the top private universities are not included. In this study the increase in UK salaries is much more pronounced. With the exception of professorial salaries, Australia appears on a par with the US.

¹ The Group of Eight comprises the eight leading research universities in Australia. Other groupings of Australian universities are identified as Innovative Research Universities (IRU) and the Australian Technology Network of universities (ATN) (see *e.g.* Table 4).

Table 2. Academic salaries 2008 (PPP) compared to 2005

	Australia		Canada		UK		USA		NZ	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Lecturer	59,000	14	65,500	9	50,500	25	70,700	16	44,900	17
Senior lecturer	71,200	13			60,400	23			58,600	14
Associate professor	83,700	14	80,500	8	74,200	29	83,000	17	71,600	18
Professor	102,300	14	100,100	8	82,200	26	113,900	18	77,700	18

However, as is indicated in Table 3, care needs to be taken with the representation of US salaries in the New Zealand study. Data provided by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 2008) show that substantive differences exist between public and private universities and also indicate that overall US academic salaries are higher than those in Australia. This of course is particularly true if one takes into account that on average the US salaries are based on a 9-10 month contract period.

Table 3. US salary and compensation levels for doctoral granting institutions (\$)

	Salary		Compensation	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
Professor	109,569	144,256	137,104	180,458
Associate professor	77,033	92,148	98,965	118,610
Assistant professor	65,416	78,840	84,204	100,810
Lecturer	49,079	59,153	63,867	78,105

Despite the favourable salary comparison, the Australian academic profession faces some serious challenges over the next decade. Over the next five years, 24% of senior academics (associate professors and professors) will retire and another 23% will follow in the next five year period. Theoretically, this means that close to 5,000 people could leave the system and would require replacement under *ceteris paribus* conditions. As this phenomenon is not specific to Australia but applies to all developed countries with a strong baby-boom generation in higher education, it can be expected that the international ‘war for talent’ will increase in intensity. Salaries will play a role in this, but other academic climate factors, such as research facilities and

stimulating colleagues will be as important. In this respect it is interesting to note that, as we have reported earlier (Coates *et al.*, 2008), Australian academics express a clear preference for research over teaching, although they report to be quite busy with teaching. There certainly appears to be a mismatch between aspirations and realities. It therefore should not come as a very great surprise that approximately 23% of the survey respondents had considered a major job change to an academic position in another country in the past five years. Interestingly, only about 11% took action.

Departure intentions vary by discipline, with those in teacher training and education science (31%) being about twice as inclined to think about leaving the Australian higher education system as their colleagues in business and administration, economics and law (17%), humanities and arts (17%) and engineering, manufacturing and construction, and architecture (18%) (see Figure 2).

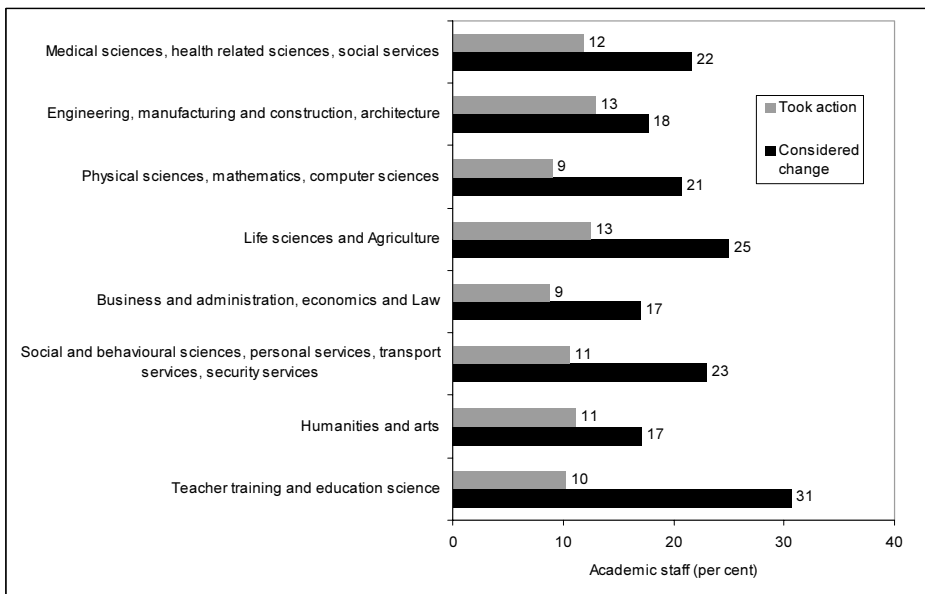


Figure 2. Change to work in another country in last five years by discipline

Furthermore, those from the disciplines engineering, manufacturing and construction, architecture (13%) and life sciences and agriculture (13%) appear to be somewhat more decisive than their colleagues in business and administration, economics and law in taking action on this front.

There is little variation by type of institution, with about 26% of Go8 academics considering an academic position in another country, compared to

20% of ATN academics. Further, little variation is apparent if we break the data down by academic rank. The largest proportion of respondents that has considered taking a position in another country is almost 31% for professors and the lowest is about 25% for lecturers. As one would expect those academics aged under 35 years are more likely (20%) to consider taking a job overseas than their older colleagues, while they are also more likely to follow through with concrete action. Given our earlier comments about the international war for talent and the exodus of senior Australian academics expected over the next decade, these findings point to a potential problem that national and institutional policy-makers need to address.

International dimensions of Australian academic research

The original 1993 Carnegie study is remarkably vague when it comes to the question of the international orientation of Australia academics. Quotations such as: “Australian academics ought to be more internationally focused. Some disciplines are very provincial in their outlooks” (Sheehan *et al.*, 1996, p.105) and “Australia seems small and remote from the international academic scene. For people who travel, their academic careers and their students (therefore the country) benefit. For others, they remain narrow and self-interested. It is a matter not simply of money, but of vision, planning, confidence and lots of support from the university administration” (Sheehan *et al.*, 1996, p.109) are found in the chapter on internationalisation, but there is no hard data to support (or refute) these respondents comments.

The 2007 CAP results allow for a more substantive picture as to the international orientation of Australian academics. It would appear from the responses that contrary to the suggestive quotations from the 1993 survey, Australian academics do have a pretty strong international outlook.

The CAP results suggest that much of the primary research undertaken in 2006 or 2007 was international in scope or orientation, with approximately 70% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this description. The response categories on the survey form for this question were scored 1, for “strongly agree”, to 5, for “strongly disagree”. Table 4 shows that the mean response does not change significantly with disciplinary grouping. There is a slight decreasing trend with institutional grouping from Go8, Other, IRU and ATN. A more pronounced trend is evident as one moves through the academic ranks. A similar trend does not appear to exist in relationship to age.

Table 4. International orientation of research

		Mean	SD
Total		2.23	1.26
Discipline	Teacher training and education science	2.21	1.16
	Humanities and arts	2.26	1.34
	Social and behavioural sciences, personal, transport and security services	2.06	1.18
	Business and administration, economics and law	2.33	1.22
	Life sciences and Agriculture	2.22	1.24
	Physical sciences, mathematics, computer sciences	2.09	1.16
	Engineering, manufacturing and construction, architecture	2.33	1.49
University group	Go8	2.05	1.17
	ATN	2.29	1.31
	IRU	2.37	1.25
	Other	2.43	1.34
Academic rank	Assistant lecturer	2.54	1.35
	Lecturer	2.35	1.33
	Senior lecturer	2.26	1.27
	Associate professor	1.96	1.02
	Professor	1.69	0.94
Age group	<=35	2.39	1.29
	36-45	2.17	1.25
	46-55	2.21	1.28
	56-65	2.28	1.31
	65+	1.86	1.17

The international orientation of Australian academics' research also translates to some extent into concrete activities. About 65% of respondents indicated some level of co-authoring with colleagues in other countries, with the mean being about 20% of their work. Some 82% of respondents indicated having published in a foreign country over the past 3 years, with the average being around 45% of their work. This is no surprise as most of the major publishing houses are located in either the US or Europe. Not surprisingly either, only around 10% of respondents indicated that they had published some of their work in a foreign language. This finding supports the reality that, at least as far as research is concerned, English is the *lingua franca*. Despite a fairly strong international orientation in research, only a limited amount of research

funding is being obtained from international organizations (between 10-15%).

Approximately 45% of survey respondents during the 2007 academic year had attended an overseas conference. There is little variation across the defined disciplinary groupings, with academics in the life sciences and agriculture attending overseas conferences a little more regularly than their colleagues in business and administration, economics and law. More academics employed at a Go8 institution attended international conferences than their counterparts at ATN, IRU or Other universities (50%, 41%, 36% and 39% respectively).

Perhaps most striking, yet not surprisingly, as one moves up through the academic ranks, attendance at international conferences becomes more common (see Figure 3). While 28% of assistant lecturers indicate attending international conferences, this figure increases to 52% for senior lecturers and culminates at almost 80% for professors.

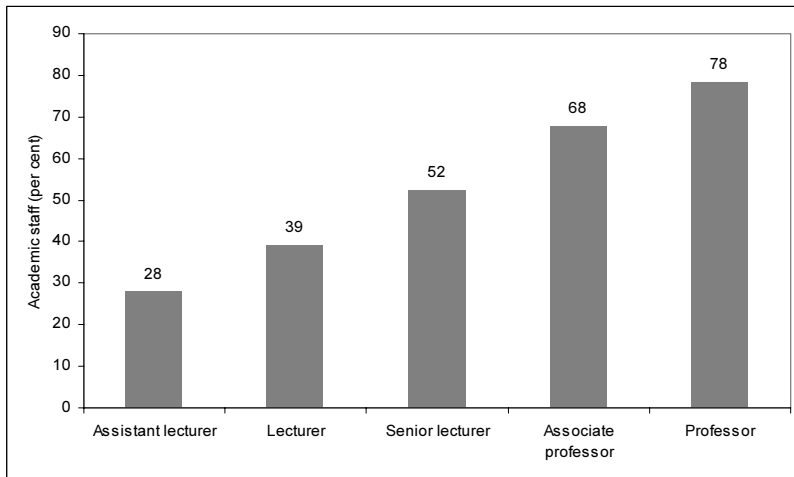


Figure 3. Attendance at an international conference in the past year

Approximately 60% of all respondents indicated that they do collaborate with international colleagues. There is little substantial difference between disciplines, except for engineering, manufacturing and construction, architecture with about 70% of respondents collaborating with international colleagues and for business and administration, economics and law with about 50%.

Respondents from Go8 institutions topped the list in terms of collaboration with international colleagues (71%), followed by those from IRU with 60%, 'other' universities with 53%, and ATN with 51%. As one moves through the academic ranks, it appears that international collaboration becomes more common. Around half of the associate lecturers (46%) and lecturers (52%)

indicate that they collaborate with international colleagues. This increases to 61% at the senior lecturer level and 74% at the associate professor level. The vast majority of Australian professors indicates international collaboration (88%). Although there is some relationship with age, this is less pronounced.

Internationalisation of teaching and learning

Over the last 25 years, international education has become big business in Australia. In fact, education currently is the country's largest service export, having overtaken leisure travel services in 2008. It also is the third largest export after coal and iron ore, totalling \$A12.5 billion (AEI, 2008). Although growth in the export of vocational training services is growing, higher education is responsible for the lion's share of this. International students have been a considerable source of revenue for Australian universities. Since 1997 there has been an increase in the proportion of international students from 9.6% to 25.5% (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008a, p.25). This has transformed Australian campuses and classrooms, and the situation in 2007 is vastly different from that at the time of the Carnegie study in 1992.

It is obvious that teaching activities have a strong international focus, whether it be in the course content or in the composition of classes. For example, in response to the statement "In your courses you emphasize international perspectives or content" only 11% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the mean response being 2.14. Furthermore, approximately 70% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that the number of international students has increased since they started teaching (mean = 2.00), which given our previous discussion indeed is the answer one would expect. However, respondents disagreed with the statement that "Currently, most of your graduate students are international", with more than 55% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement (mean = 3.51).

It is instructive to break down the responses to these three statements by different groupings to discern more detailed variations. We have done this using our standard breakdown by disciplinary grouping, institutional type, academic rank and age. The results are presented in the following four tables.

Table 5 shows little apparent variation by disciplinary grouping on any of these three statements. Staff teaching business administration and law do appear to place slightly lower emphasis on international perspectives, while engineering staff report having more international graduate students.

Table 5. Internationalisation of teaching by disciplinary grouping

	In your courses you emphasise international perspectives or content		Since you started teaching, the number of international students has increased		Currently, most of your graduate students are international	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Teacher training and education science	2.15	1.05	2.11	1.32	3.43	1.32
Humanities and arts	2.20	1.07	1.89	1.43	3.44	1.43
Social and behavioural sciences, personal services, transport services, security services	2.06	0.96	1.92	1.39	3.62	1.39
Business and administration, economics and law	2.30	1.12	1.90	1.46	3.48	1.46
Life sciences and Agriculture	1.93	1.08	2.13	1.40	3.55	1.40
Physical sciences, mathematics, computer sciences	2.15	0.91	2.00	1.50	3.76	1.50
Engineering, manufacturing and construction, architecture	1.91	1.12	2.09	1.40	3.20	1.45
Total	2.14	1.05	2.00	1.17	3.51	1.42

Note: Responses to the three statements were on a 5-point scale from 1, for “strongly agree” to 5, to “strongly disagree”.

Some variation does exist by institutional type, as illustrated in Table 6. Respondents located within the Other category of institutions agreed more strongly with the statement that “Since you started teaching, the number of international students has increased”. Furthermore, respondents from IRU institutions more strongly disagreed with the statement that “Currently, most of your graduate students are international” (mean = 3.90), while the results show that those academics at Go8 institutions appear to have somewhat higher numbers of international graduate students (mean = 3.41), although they still tend to disagree with the statement.

As academic rank increases so does the emphasis on international perspectives or content in courses, as does agreement with the statement “Since you started teaching, the number of international students has increased”. However, there is little variation between academic ranks on the statement “Currently, most of your graduate students are international”, with the mean response being in disagreement with this statement (mean = 3.51) (see Table 7).

Table 6. Internationalisation of teaching by university group

	In your courses you emphasise international perspectives or content		Since you started teaching, the number of international students has increased		Currently, most of your graduate students are international	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Go8	2.22	1.13	1.83	1.015	3.41	1.39
ATN	2.08	0.90	1.98	1.22	3.43	1.48
IRU	2.15	1.25	1.69	0.95	3.90	1.41
Other	2.10	1.01	2.23	1.28	3.63	1.41
Total	2.14	1.05	2.00	1.17	3.51	1.42

Table 7. Internationalisation of teaching by academic rank

	In your courses you emphasise international perspectives or content		Since you started teaching, the number of international students has increased		Currently, most of your graduate students are international	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Assistant lecturer	2.40	1.70	2.32	1.13	3.23	1.44
Lecturer	2.22	1.03	2.11	1.24	3.49	1.46
Senior lecturer	2.17	1.06	1.96	1.11	3.62	1.34
Associate professor	1.92	0.98	1.94	1.19	3.59	1.41
Professor	1.92	1.08	1.92	1.08	3.53	1.49
Total	2.14	1.05	2.00	1.17	3.51	1.42

As with academic rank, age also provides some diversity in response to the questions. A review of key results suggests that when asked their level of agreement with the statement “In your courses you emphasise international perspectives or content”, we see that those aged between 46 and 65 tended to agree with this statement most strongly.

Further, if we look at the percentage of responses in each answer category we find that as age increases the agreement with the statement “Since you started teaching, the number of international students has increased” also increases.

There appears to be little discernable variation by age to the statement “Currently, most of our graduate students are international”, as shown in Table 8, though, when it comes to increases in number of international students, the 65+ age group appears to be an exception: an explanation for this is not obvious.

Table 8. Internationalisation of teaching by age group

	In your courses you emphasise international perspectives or content		Since you started teaching, the number of international students has increased		Currently, most of your graduate students are international	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
35 or younger	2.49	1.08	2.55	1.22	3.44	1.43
36 to 45	2.17	1.04	2.14	1.10	3.52	1.39
46 to 55	2.06	0.96	1.95	1.18	3.50	1.43
56 to 65	2.05	1.06	1.77	1.11	3.58	1.41
More than 65	2.27	1.42	2.27	1.42	3.60	1.71
Total	2.14	1.05	2.00	1.17	3.51	1.42

As one would expect within the Australian context, only about 3% of courses are taught in a language other than English. Although we have no substantive data to support our interpretation, logic would suggest that this 3% is language courses.

Although most international students enrolled in Australian study programmes are doing so in universities in the country, there also is a sizeable industry in teaching students offshore. This takes the form either of Australian universities setting up campuses in other countries or of providing Australian programmes in partnership with local institutions in overseas countries. In the latter case, students enrol in an Australian degree program and normally would be taught in a combination of intensive residential and distance education modes, with academic support provided through the local partner institution.

According to the CAP survey results, during 2006 or 2007 approximately 20% of academics were involved in teaching off-shore. When this is broken down by disciplinary grouping it can be seen that teacher training and education science tends to be most involved in teaching offshore, with about 27% of respondents. Other disciplinary groupings that rate highly are life sciences and agriculture and the medical sciences, health related sciences, and social services. It is important to emphasise that the CAP 2007 population does not include off-shore staff. Hence the provision by staff in the offshore campuses of Australian universities, with its great emphasis on business studies, is not reflected in these figures.

If we break down the results by institutional grouping then we find that academics located at Other and ATN institutions appear to teach more courses abroad than their colleagues at either IRU or Go8 institutions. This result is confirmed by comparison with the actual percentage of international students

(see Table 9) taught offshore by the various institutional groupings (DEEWR, 2007). These show that ATN universities teach about 40% and the Other universities teach about 33%, which once again reconfirms the representativeness of our sample.

When we break down the results to the academic ranks that are teaching courses abroad, we find that almost twice as many professors are teaching courses abroad than assistant lecturers. In line with this, we also find that those aged 46 and above are undertaking a greater proportion of this type of teaching activity.

Table 9. Onshore and offshore students taught in 2007

	Onshore		Offshore	
	n	%	n	%
Go8	59,313	33	9,086	13
ATN	32,681	18	28,927	42
IRU	21,755	12	8,437	12
Other	68,455	38	22,295	32

Conclusion

As noted, these current results are intermediary, with more thorough and detailed analysis awaiting release of the validated international and hence national data. Nonetheless, the results do provide insight into the internationalisation of the Australian academic workforce.

It is too early to isolate and emphasise selected conclusions, but the results show in relation to the composition of the workforce that:

- the Australian academic profession has remained quite international in its composition over the last 15 years;
- the dominance of the United States as a contributing foreign country has diminished, but the expected replacement of the U.S. and the UK as the 'delivering countries' for academic staff by Asian countries has not come about;
- given increasing retirements in the next decade, importing academics is likely to play an important role in sustaining the Australian academic workforce; and
- Australia exports a small number of academic staff to other countries, with somewhere between a fifth and a quarter considering taking up an overseas academic post.

As an advanced knowledge economy, the size of Australia's academic industry means that internationalisation plays an important role in research. In particular, the results outlined in this initial analysis suggest that:

- much of the primary research undertaken in 2006 or 2007 was international in scope or orientation, especially in the social and physical sciences, at research-intensive institutions, and with higher ranked and older staff;
- around 60% of Australian academics collaborate with international colleagues on the production and publication of their academic contributions, with notable variations in this figure across disciplinary groups; and
- around half of all responding academics had attended an international conference in the last year, a figure which varied across institutional groups and rose to around 80% for professors.

Australia has a highly internationalised student population, and the results reported suggest that this is partly reflected in the international orientation of the teaching staff. The paper records that:

- teaching activities have a strong international focus, whether it be in the course content or in the composition of classes;
- academics reported more emphasis on internationalisation in undergraduate rather than graduate education, particularly at the often larger research intensive institutions;
- as with research, there appears to be an increasing emphasis on the internationalisation of teaching with increases in academic rank; and
- Australian academic staff, particularly at the less research intensive institutions, appear to be responsible for a relatively large amount of offshore teaching.

We emphasise again that caution should be applied to drawing conclusions from these early indicative results. Final data is not available and detailed analysis has yet to be undertaken in terms of any policy or research consequences. Even so, it is instructive to chart the potentiality in the 2007 CAP data and to project a few ideas on how such analysis may unfold.

Clearly, the information provided by academic staff in 2007 has the potential to provide evidence-based insight into the international composition of Australia's academic workforce. As sketched in this paper, this helps to understand how the workforce is aligned with other aspects of the system, such as the student population, and more broadly how the academic workforce is aligned with other professional industries. Understanding the trade in

'academic talent' has important implications for the nature and growth of Australia's knowledge economy.

Of course, much of the trade in academic knowledge takes place *via* the exchange of ideas rather than people. This paper has demonstrated the potential of the 2007 CAP data in helping understand this complex industry in which internationalisation plays an increasingly important role. What are the main ways in which Australian academic staff engage with research colleagues in other countries? What institution- and system-level policies and practices could be developed or reinforced to support researchers in enhancing their productivity and impact? As the international CAP data becomes available, it will play a vital role in helping researchers and policy analysts shed insight on such matters.

It was suggested at the outset that in the last decade internationalisation has been one of the major change forces in Australian university education. A wide range of business and support systems have been put in place to underpin and sustain growth in this area. The 2007 CAP data balance information on commercial and student affairs with the perspectives of teaching academics. Understanding how academic staff are responding to an increasingly international diverse student body, and how they are infusing international perspectives in ways that benefit domestic students, will help to further enrich and add value to educational provision.

These brief ideas are offered by way of suggestive conclusions. Analysis of the international data and discussion with international colleagues will help understanding of and shape their relevance on a truly international scale.

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