

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: Demand Driven Higher Education – Student to Teacher ratios

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Rhiannon

QUESTION No.: AI-179

With a target of 40% more students studying bachelor degrees within 4 years, what modelling has been done to ascertain likely student teacher ratios with the expected expansion of student numbers?

What types of student teacher ratios are we seeing at the moment in the different types of universities, for example rural v regional v city sandstones?

How have ratios changed from 2000; and how does it compare with OECD best practice?

Do these ratios affect student choice of where they study? International students?

Whilst the department has advised Australian universities employ only 16.2% casual staff, what modelling has been done on future increases in that percentage given the planned expansion of the student numbers, and the looming retirement of the current fulltime academic cohort from the sector (with few experienced academics said to be in the system to replace them)?

ANSWER

The Government has set an ambitious goal for national attainment. It is seeking to increase the proportion of 25 to 34 year old Australians with a qualification at bachelor level or above to 40 per cent by 2025. To achieve this goal, the estimated total number of domestic bachelor places will need to increase by 17.7 per cent, from an estimated 505 000 places in 2011 to 594 000 places in 2025¹.

The Australian Government has commissioned research into the academic workforce leading to the publication of two reports, *The Australian Academic Profession in Transition*, published by the Centre for Study of Higher Education and, *Regenerating the Academic Workforce: The careers, intentions and motivations of higher degree research students in Australia*, published on the Department's website. These reports will assist universities to better understand the concerns and needs of their academic workforce. Universities as autonomous, independent institutions are responsible for managing their workforce needs and strategies.

¹ These projections have been derived from projected Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) which have been adjusted to exclude courses below bachelor level and include relevant courses offered by private higher education providers.

Table 1 shows the student/staff ratio was 20.7 across all universities in 2010, up from 17.8 in 2000. Table 1 provides information on trends in the student/staff ratio across groups of universities between 2000 and 2010.

Table 1: Student / Staff ratio by university groups, 2000-2010

Cohort	Student / Staff Ratio										
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Group of Eight	15.4	16.3	17.5	17.7	17.5	16.4	16.5	16.9	17.4	17.3	17.8
Australian Technology Network	19.6	19.3	20.2	20.1	19.7	19.8	19.7	20.3	19.8	20.0	21.1
Innovative Research Universities	17.8	17.8	18.5	20.1	19.4	19.0	19.4	19.8	20.3	20.6	20.8
Other Providers	19.8	20.7	21.3	21.8	21.6	22.1	22.2	22.2	22.2	23.4	24.0
All Universities	17.8	18.4	19.3	19.7	19.4	19.1	19.2	19.5	19.7	20.1	20.7
<i>Regional Headquartered</i>	<i>20.3</i>	<i>21.7</i>	<i>23.1</i>	<i>23.1</i>	<i>23.5</i>	<i>23.9</i>	<i>23.9</i>	<i>23.4</i>	<i>22.7</i>	<i>23.4</i>	<i>23.5</i>

Note: Regional Headquartered universities are defined here as those having their largest campus outside the major city zone of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Remoteness Structure. They include Charles Sturt University, Southern Cross University, University of New England, University of Ballarat, Central Queensland University, University of Southern Queensland, University of Tasmania, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and Charles Darwin University.

Table 2 shows the student / staff ratio for selected OECD countries in 2009. It is not possible to derive a best practice benchmark due to the small number of countries with comparable statistics.

Note that OECD estimates of the student/staff ratio are not directly comparable with student / staff ratios compiled from DEEWR Higher Education Statistics because:

- the OECD data includes all staff related to teaching and/or research while DEEWR data includes teaching only and teaching and research staff but excludes research only staff.
- the OECD data excludes non-award students while DEEWR data includes non-award students.

Student / staff ratio is not equivalent to average class size.

Table 2: Student-staff ratio for selected OECD countries, 2009

Country	University level
	Ratio
Australia²	14.4
Germany	11.5
Ireland ¹	14.3
Japan	11.5
New Zealand	17.6
Sweden ¹	8.8
United Kingdom ¹	16.5
US ¹	15.3
OECD Mean	15.7

¹Includes all tertiary

²Public institutions only