



From the President's Desk

by Dave Marr

Another summer's drawing to a close and we're almost into autumn, which signals the start of the academic year. New intakes have been decided and enrolments, I'm sure, are well underway. It is a busy time for AAIR members! So, if you're in Melbourne or its surrounds, AAIR is offering you a bit of a diversion from the commencement of your year's busy-ness.

On Wednesday 16 March at CQ Melbourne, 113 Queen Street, you have the opportunity to join AAIR for its first regional dinner meeting with Dr Hamish Coates, Professor for Higher Education at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE), University of Melbourne. Hamish will be speaking on '[Australian Institutional Research—Framing Upcoming Challenges & Opportunities](#)'. It will also be a great opportunity to network with your peers in a convivial environment. Can I please encourage our **Victorian colleagues** to support this initiative? Of course, if you're from out of town, you're also most welcome to attend: \$45 for members; \$55 +

booking fee for non-members. Please visit our Eventbrite page to register for this event. Places are limited so be sure to book in as soon as you can.

I mentioned in the January Newsletter that AAIR has sent out invoices to those members whose memberships have lapsed. We're trialling the use of PayPal this year, which allows members to use credit card facilities. Feedback in previous years indicated that members really wanted this facility, which has not been available in the past. If you're still mad keen to belong to AAIR, pay up and you'll keep access to the wonderful services we can offer you. For those participating in this process, please let us know how you found it. We're always keen to improve our processes, especially if they also save on administration costs.

As part of our drive to refresh the AAIR Executive Committee, we've invited Greg Jakob from Federation University to observe the Committee's meetings in 2016,

and to become involved in one or more of the projects we're currently running. I very much appreciate Greg's interest in AAIR and look forward to his contributions this year.

If you're happy with the services AAIR offers you, we're always keen to hear from you. Even if you're not happy, we'd still like to hear your concerns and the ways we might be able to improve things for you. You can write directly to me at president@air.org.au, or via our Secretary, Andrea, at secretary@air.org.au.



Dave Marr, President

Higher Education@home

by Louise Hargreaves

Policy & Regulation Watch

1. [Tax reform: Morrison pours cold water on adding GST to health and education.](#) Treasurer Scott Morrison has pledged Australians will be 'winners' when the Turnbull government finally reveals its election-year tax reform package, while effectively ruling out imposing the GST on health or education.
2. ['The end of TAFE as we know it': leaked paper details federal vocational takeover.](#) The federal government would take over TAFE funding from the states under a radical plan to be presented to the states and territories at a high-level meeting in March. Under the Turnbull government proposal, obtained by Fairfax Media, TAFE fees would be deregulated and TAFEs would receive the same levels of funding as private colleges in a bid to increase competition in the sector.
3. [TEQSA's proposed reporting of sector financial metrics.](#) An article published in 'The Australian' newspaper on January 20 may create the impression that TEQSA proposes to change the nature of how financial information is reported by universities. This is not the case. TEQSA sought feedback through a sector-wide consultation on a proposed report of the key financial metrics we collect from all types of registered higher education providers. This consultation was not related in any way to how university financial statements, or those of other higher education providers, are reported publicly, but was intended to guide us on the best way of presenting a sector-wide information profile.
4. [Directions for the Higher Education Standards Panel.](#) Minister for Education and Training, Senator Simon Birmingham, has reappointed the Chair and members of the Higher Education Standards Panel for a further two year period, together with the new panel member – Dr Krystal Evans. Minister Birmingham said the Higher Education Standards Panel will help ensure there is a smooth transition to a revised higher education standards framework, which will take effect in January 2017. Over the next two years the Panel will also work and advise the Minister on a

wide range of quality-related issues, including options for improving the transparency of student admissions policies, and reviewing the impact of the TEQSA Act on the higher education system.

5. [What the National Innovation and Science Agenda didn't say about skills and jobs.](#) The recent launch of the National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA) sets out four interrelated clusters of initiatives with a collective purpose to increase productivity, support high wage jobs and the next wave of economic prosperity. But, writes Dr Craig Fowler, NCVET's Managing Director, other initiatives essential to an effective national innovative system are largely overlooked, although the newly announced inquiry in workforce for new economy by the Standing Committee on Education and Employment is welcome.
6. [Minister disputes claim visa's cost and irrelevance is a turn-off.](#) The uptake of visas to allow international students to stay and work in Australia for two years following graduation is 'very low' and experts say the prohibitive cost and lack of genuine degree-related work opportunities are to blame. An analysis of Immigration Department data shows, of the 35,127 people who had graduated and held a 573 visa on 15 March last year, just 5836 had moved to a 485 visa—known as post-study work rights visa—on 31 December.
7. [Lower student loan payback threshold on the cards, education experts say.](#) Industry experts believe Education Minister Simon Birmingham is looking at lowering the threshold at which students pay back their loans, after he said he was looking at the sustainability of the system.
8. [Financial Performance of Australian Universities in 2014.](#) The latest publicly available financial data for Australian Universities are for 2014. Universities sourced revenues of \$27.15 billion and expended \$25.34 billion for their higher



education and independent operations. Some 60.4 per cent of funding came from government sources, including HECS payments. [Click here](#) to download the report by Professor Frank Larkins and Professor Ian Marshman of the LH Martin Institute.

9. [Helping disadvantaged Australians succeed at university.](#) Twenty-one projects from 12 universities have been awarded funding of \$2.4 million through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP) National Priorities Pool. The projects aim to ensure that Australians from low socio-economic status backgrounds who have the ability to study at university have the opportunity to do so.

Sector News and Views

10. [Academic Gongs – Australia Day 2016.](#) 604 Australians have been recognised with Orders of Australia on Australia Day 2016. As always, members of the tertiary education sector featured strongly in the honours list, with 77 awards (81 in 2015), particularly in the upper categories.
11. [Higher education to make top five growth industries: IBISWorld.](#) Higher education will rank among the five fastest growing industry sectors this financial year, with income increasing by more than \$1 billion, business analysis firm IBISWorld predicts. The company says improving international enrolments and steady take-up from domestic students will drive a 3.6 per cent increase in earnings, putting higher education among the 'industries expected to soar' in 2015–16.

12. [Higher Education Workforce of the Future](#). With a variety of environmental factors impacting Australian universities, AHEIA, in partnership with the DVCs Corporate group of Universities Australia, has commissioned a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to examine the future operational and workforce needs of universities to enable the sector to compete in a globally competitive environment.
13. [Focus on quantity unfair to students](#). It isn't surprising to see vice-chancellors pivot the 'Great ATAR War of 2016' to a discussion about alternative entry schemes and the inadequacy of the current ranking system. While there is a real debate to be had about the value of using one number to determine a student's viability, universities, as reluctant as they might be, must acknowledge the current furore is actually more reflective of a broader issue facing the tertiary sector—the impact of demand-driven funding.
14. [How Regional Universities Drive Regional Innovation Report – Office of the Chief Economist](#). Australia's regional universities play an important role in regional innovation. Case studies have highlighted instances of impact, however there has been little focused analysis on strategies and mechanisms that regional universities employ to underpin performance in this area. By surveying the senior management of regional universities and other organisations in Australia and internationally, [this study](#) has qualitatively assessed how regional universities drive regional innovation.
15. [Complaint Handling in NSW Universities](#). A discussion paper by the New South Wales Ombudsman. This paper sets out for discussion a minimum standards scheme for university complaint handling that, if adopted, would provide a university with the capacity to adequately handle any complaint likely to arise. Download the paper [here](#).
16. [Uberiversity](#) We love talking about disruption, and when you buckle the word digital to it, we really begin to wax lyrical. Op-ed by *Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the Australian National University*.

17. [Australian higher education: where to now?](#) There is a growing disparity between Australian universities and competitors in Asia that government policy needs to address, writes Greg McCarthy. Turnbull's optimism that universities will serve industry as an act of noblesse oblige fails to recognise the unravelling of the elite model of university life that he experienced at Sydney University and Oxford.
18. [Does having 43 universities add up?](#) Debate about the future of universities almost always focuses on revenue: whether [students should pay more for degrees](#), enrolment volumes and acceptance levels, government funding, and commercialising research discoveries. More debate is needed on the expense side of the equation: how to drive a radical re-engineering of university cost bases, principally through mergers of second and third-tier universities.
19. [Sydney Uni overhaul includes option for fourth 'workplace' year](#). The University of Sydney will introduce an optional fourth year to its undergraduate degrees as part of an overhaul of its education model. Students would be able to opt for either a year that readied them for the workplace or a traditional research-track honours year.

Big Data, Analytics & Technology

20. [The annual Horizon Report details short- and long-term technologies and trends that will impact higher education in the next five years](#). The rise of robots is no longer science fiction; and any institution interested in remaining relevant in the next five years should start advancing 'cultures of innovation.' These are just two of the revelations part of the New Media Consortium's (NMC) and EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative's (ELI) [2016 Higher Education Edition](#) of the annual Horizon Report.

Graduate Outcomes

21. [Deakin research shows most engineers work in other fields](#). Less than half of Australia's recent engineering graduates are working in the field, new research has found, with the researchers calling for prospective students to be better informed about the full range of career possibilities.

International Students in Australia

22. The [low dollar has propelled the international education industry to record heights](#), with foreign students boosting the economy by \$19.2 billion last year. New figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that the resurgent industry grew by more than \$2 billion in 2015, on the back of four successive record quarters. They included an all-time record three months between July and September, when revenue exceeded \$5bn for the first time.
23. [State nomination offers pathways for international students who want to stay in Australia](#). International graduates of Australian universities who want to continue to work and live in the country once they have completed their studies can look at specific pathways to do so. As part of an overall aim to attract and retain international talent in specific skill areas, Australian states and territories provide state nominations to working and living for international graduates.

Rankings and Ratings & Benchmarking

24. [Australia's universities among the most globally engaged](#). Australia has come out ahead of North America and just behind the UK to rank an extraordinary second overall in the latest global rankings of universities deemed to be truly international. Over half of Australia's universities (24 institutions) have featured in the globally-regarded rankings published in January in the [Times Higher Education World's Most International Universities 2016](#).
25. [Oz shines with influential minds](#). The University of Melbourne has inched out Monash and the University of Queensland to have the most individual, highly cited researchers across the disciplines. Melbourne has 12 individual researchers on the list of 3000 following an [analysis of citation data by Thomson Reuters](#).

Research

26. The Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Christopher Pyne, [has announced](#) that applications are now open for the latest round of funding for CRCs and CRC Projects (CRC-Ps). Mr Pyne said the funding rounds were the first held under the Government's new CRC Programme guidelines. [Funding rounds for CRCs](#) (Round 18) and CRC-Ps (Round 1) open for applications on 1 February. CRC-P applications close on 17 March; CRC applications close on 31 March.
27. [ID code will track researchers' work and 'save time, money'](#). Australian researchers will soon have a unique 12-digit identifying number that will allow their work to be tracked anywhere in the world and reduce the time and cost associated with research applications. Australia's 47,000 researchers in 40 institutions officially became part of the Open Researcher and Contributor ID, or ORCID, initiative in February.

Student Recruitment & Mobility

28. [FactCheck: has growth in new university enrolments flat-lined?](#) University enrolment numbers are one way to test the impact that higher education policies are having on demand for university places. The latest figures give us a sense of how enrolments have tracked since the introduction of the 'demand-driven' system in 2012, when the federal government removed a limit on the number of government funded students undertaking a bachelor degree.
29. Australia has experienced [the biggest jump in Indigenous higher education enrolments](#) in nearly a decade and overall enrolment has reached a record high, according to new student data, with notable increases in enrolments of regional students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
30. [Agriculture degree programmes on the rise at universities](#). The number of farmers in Australia might have fallen dramatically over the past two decades but agricultural degrees are back in vogue. As Australian agriculture enters a new growth phase, universities have seen a revival in interest in agricultural studies from students without farming backgrounds but who want careers in the technological and engineering aspects of agriculture.

31. [Drop in students starting postgraduate courses](#). New postgraduate student numbers slumped last year, in an unexpected sign that one-way growth under the demand-driven higher education funding scheme has hit a speed bump. Postgraduate commencements declined by almost four per cent in the first half of 2015, compared with the same period the previous year.
32. [The Day That Australian Outbound Student Mobility Changed Forever](#). The number of Australian university students undertaking international student experiences has been steadily marching north since the early 2000s. Our growth rate has been the best, or amongst the best, in the developed world for a decade, with year-on-year growth rates that would make the Chinese economy blush.
33. [ATAR and higher education admission](#). In [a recent newspaper article](#), there was [controversy](#) over the declining proportion of Victoria universities publishing '[clearly-in](#)' ATARs—the ATAR above which all applicants are admitted. In Victoria, the share of courses with a clearly-in ATAR has declined from 40 per cent last year to 25 per cent this year. [Some universities say](#) that ATARs, and especially ATAR cut-offs, can be misleading.
34. [NSW universities are admitting students with ATARs as low as 30](#) into some of the state's top tertiary degrees, a Fairfax Media investigation into confidential university data has revealed. Students with marks up to 40 points below the advertised course cut-off are being accepted in fields such as business, teaching and engineering, according to the 2016 admissions figures from the University of Sydney, UNSW, Macquarie University and Western Sydney University.
35. [Low ATAR offers result in few low ATAR completions](#). The *SMH* has [lots of NSW university offers data](#) to contribute to the annual ATAR controversy. It's the usual story of students being offered places with very low ATARs. There are always lots of threads to this controversy. Are low-ATAR admissions a sign of declining academic standards? Do we place too much emphasis on ATAR anyway? Should universities be more open about their admission practices? Do low-ATAR enrolments risk putting incompetent professionals out into the workforce?

While there are real issues here, some numbers are useful for putting things into perspective.

36. [University admissions can easily be simplified for students](#). Welcome to another recruitment and admissions season that gives us the kick of being in the know at the expense of transparency and certainty for students and their families.

Who's on the Move (or not)?

37. [Navitas chief executive Rod Jones plans to remain](#) at the helm of the education company he co-founded for at least another two years to help steer the company through the loss of its 20-year partnership with Macquarie University.
38. [McMillen to stay at Newcastle University until 2019](#). The head of Newcastle University has signed on for another three and a half years saying the timing will allow her to finish what she started and have the university well set up for the future. Caroline McMillen, who was appointed to lead Newcastle in 2011, has renewed her contract until October 2019.

Tips and Tricks

39. [Using the camera function in Excel](#). This Tech Tip was submitted to AIR by Angela Henderson, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, Keiser University. The camera tool allows you to take a snapshot of any selected range of data, table, or graph, and paste it as a linked picture in Excel. The pasted snapshot can be formatted and resized using picture tools and will update automatically with any changes made to the original data source.

Institutional Researcher's Corner

40. [Four paths to gain buy-in for analytics projects](#). Have you ever had a great idea for an analytics project only to see it end up in approval purgatory? Or maybe you've had some initial successes with analytics and you're ready to expand a program, but are struggling with new funding? This article provides advice from four analytics leaders in higher education on how to gain buy-in for analytics projects.

41. [Collecting the right data isn't enough — colleges must know how to use it.](#) The Gates Foundation has put out a call for [a better national infrastructure for higher education data](#) to give policymakers, parents, and students more complete information about access, outcomes, and cost. While new federal reporting requirements—and benchmarking opportunities that would come with them—are at least a couple of years down the road, colleges and universities can and should move forward with data about their own campuses. The New Media Consortium cites an increasing focus on measuring learning as one of the main drivers of ed tech adoption over the next year or two. In the newly released '[NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Higher Education Edition](#),' the organisation also highlights learning analytics as one of the most important developments of the year in educational technology for higher education.

42. [A New Vision for Institutional Research.](#)

This month, AIR will release the *Statement of Aspirational Practice for Institutional Research*. The *Statement of Aspirational Practice for Institutional Research* establishes a future-oriented vision of high-quality institutional research practices centred on student success. It is a response to myriad disruptive innovations in higher education, including new technologies, new business structures, and new data, all of which increase capacity for information that supports decision making. The new vision for IR presented in the aspirational statement stems from changes in the field—that is, more people have access to the tools and data that used to reside solely in the IR office. In addition, growing numbers of stakeholders are broadly engaged in the use of data and information to make decisions on tactical, operational, and strategic levels. [Read MORE!](#)

Frivolous Favourites

43. [Department Meeting Discourse Explained](#)

What You Hear	What It Means
Let's come to order.	This meeting should've started 15 minutes ago.
Who'll take notes?	I'm not doing it two months in a row.
We have five items on the agenda.	We'll be lucky if we get past two.
You have the documents in front of you.	I see that none of you downloaded what I sent.
With all due respect ...	I'm about to be rude.
I have a question.	I have a comment.
I have issues with --	I can't tell you how much this pisses me off.
Can you repeat that?	I need to buy some time.
What's best for our students ...	What works for me ...
I'm a bit puzzled by ...	I hate ...
Do I hear a motion?	Will someone please save me?
Let's send this back to the committee.	Let's deep-six this baby.
Can we take this up next time?	I don't have my minions here right now.
I have to leave early for another meeting.	I'm more important than you.
I'm sorry, but I have to pick up my son.	I have my priorities straight.
Do I see a hand?	Stop interrupting.
As a point of procedure ...	No other way I can stop this.
If I may make a comment ...	Now that everyone else has had a say, I intend to drone on for as long as I like.
Paper ballots, please.	I see we don't trust each other.
How about just a show of hands?	We'll smoke 'em out.
Please, this is a private matter.	Back-channel all sniping e-mail.
As I recall, we do have a precedent for that ...	As the longest-standing faculty member in the room, I can make up anything before 1970.
We can decide this next matter in a hurry.	I hope no one's read beyond page two.
That's not what I said.	I wish I hadn't said that.
Correct me if I'm wrong.	I know I'm right on this one.
Here are our recommendations.	Here are our demands.
To speak anecdotally ...	I haven't a shred of evidence to back this up.
The administration may not agree with us on this one.	The provost wishes we were dead.
I don't believe Professor Jones has had a chance to speak.	Stop marking papers, Jonesie.
We need to set up a committee.	We don't want to talk about it now.
I'm just the moderator.	The buck starts here.
Let me remind you ...	I know you know I know you know.
Personally ...	I love talking about myself.
The dean has asked for our opinion.	He wants a rubber-stamp approval.
The meeting is now adjourned.	Time for a drinkie.

Positions Vacant



Seeking another opportunity in Institutional Research in Australia? Try our [Higher Education Jobs](#) webpage for current vacancies in the profession. If you are seeking an international career change see our American colleagues [AIR Careers](#) page.

Training & Development

Looking for some training and development?

See our [Training and Development](#) webpage focused on training for institutional researchers.

Looking for higher education conferences and events?

Here is a selection of upcoming events that may be of interest. See our [Events/Fora](#) webpage for more national and international events.

AAIR Regional Meeting, Melbourne

[Australian Institutional Research – Framing Upcoming Challenges and Opportunities.](#)



- Wednesday 16 March 2016 @ 6pm
- CQ Melbourne, 113 Queen Street, Melbourne

AAIR is proud to announce that it is hosting its first regional dinner meeting in Melbourne in March. We invite you to come along, enjoy a meal and great company, listen to Dr Hamish Coates, Professor of Higher Education at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE), University of Melbourne, a speaker renowned in the higher education space, and network the night away!

National Tertiary Education Union Seminar

- 8 March 2016
- FEU Building, Ground Floor, 120 Clarendon St, Southbank, Melbourne

[Undue influence: what the Innovation agenda will mean for university-based research.](#)

This seminar examines the government's National Innovation and Science Agenda, announced in December 2015, the implications for universities, for researchers and for research. The panel of speakers will discuss changes to the distribution of university research block grants and the consequences of removing publications and research student load from the funding formulae, thus giving greater emphasis to the importance of non-competitive grant research income.

[EduTECH Australia](#)

- 30 to 31 May 2016 | 1 June 2016 (post-conference Masterclasses)
- Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

EduTECH is a giant festival for all of education. It is the only event that brings together schools, tertiary education, VET and workplace learning under one roof. It features one large exhibition with eight parallel conferences, plus eight post-event masterclasses for a more tailored and intimate learning experience.

Join the other 8000+ attendees at EduTECH next year! Book now:

<http://edutech.net.au/registration.html>

Visit the website: www.edutech.net.au



- 14 to 15 July 2016
- Melbourne Park Function Centre, Batman Avenue, Melbourne

The [2016 Australian Higher Education Summit](#) will provide attendees with an unparalleled opportunity to examine the management structures, partnerships and value chains within the tertiary sector that are paramount for personal, commercial and operational success.

Through a series of development sessions, participants will gather key insights from world-renowned industry experts on the critical issues, functions and services of the higher education sector.

Enjoy Reading?



Here are a few recent releases:

Essential Reading List: [Top 10 absolute must-reads for international higher education professionals](#). New publications on the internationalisation of higher education come out every day and, as a busy professional, it might be difficult to keep up with all that is current and interesting. With this in mind, EAIE has put together a list of essential resources that you shouldn't miss.

[Global Perspectives and Local Challenges Surrounding International Student Mobility](#), edited by [Krishna Bista](#) and [Charlotte Foster](#), explores comparative research regarding the implementation of effective strategies needed when working with native and non-native individuals in educational settings.

The book offers perspectives from international student experiences, as well as views on current mobility trends, immigration policies, and challenges with cultural expectations. This publication will be an important resource for educators, policymakers, and university staff who interact with international students.

[Revolution in Higher Education: How a Small Band of Innovators Will Make College Accessible and Affordable](#). Richard A Demillo. Colleges and universities have become increasingly costly, and, except for a handful of highly selective, elite institutions, unresponsive to twenty-first-century needs. But for the past few years, technology-fuelled innovation has begun to transform higher education, introducing new ways to disseminate knowledge and better ways to learn—all at lower cost.

[Breakpoint: The Changing Marketplace for Higher Education](#). Jon McGee. In *Breakpoint*, Jon argues that higher education is in the midst of an extraordinary moment of demographic, economic, and cultural transition that has significant implications for how colleges understand their mission, their market, and their management.

Drawing from an extensive assessment of demographic and economic trends, McGee presents a broad and integrative picture of these changes, while stressing the importance of decisive campus leadership.

Higher Education Abroad

by Louise Hargreaves

Global News & Views

1. [Building 'very low walls' leads to higher education innovation.](#) Elon University's President explains how to foster a culture of 'positive restlessness'. Innovation is a word with many connotations. For some, it suggests technological advancement, while for others it is discovering new approaches to old problems. For Elon University President Leo Lambert, it is a continual push for improvement, both institutionally and professionally. To be effective, Lambert says innovation has to become part of the fabric of the institution, supported and nourished by everyone.
2. [How the Internet will disrupt higher education's most valuable asset: Prestige.](#) It happened to newspapers. It happened to magazines. It happened to books. Now it's happening to higher education: another industry thrown into turmoil and shock because its business model has been overturned by the Internet.
3. [Better Data Are Key to Improved Performance by Students and Colleges.](#) As college costs and student-debt levels continue to rise, the public and policy makers are increasingly demanding evidence of a [return on their investment](#). Yet, says a [new report](#) from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, consumers lack critical information that would help them answer the trillion-dollar question: 'Is College worth it?'
4. [Boosting the role of IT will help universities thrive, report says.](#) Higher education institutions should seize the initiative and grow the strategic role of IT to differentiate themselves in the market. That's according to the 2016 'Trends to Watch' report on Education Technology by Ovum, which says that institutions cannot remain static and expect to survive.
5. [Universities around the world offer tuition in English.](#) There are now almost 8,000 courses being taught in English by leading universities in non-English speaking countries, according to a project mapping their expansion. The rise of universities teaching in English,

rather than their own local language, has become a global phenomenon.

6. [Pearson restructuring, attributed in part to falling enrolments, will cut 4,000 jobs.](#) The Wall Street Journal reports the \$450 million restructuring plan includes cutting 4,000 employees (about 10 per cent of its workforce), merging businesses, and focusing on a streamlined number of big opportunities—moves that come in part because of falling higher education enrolments in the United States due to increased regulation.
7. [NZ and Malaysia establish degree compatibility.](#) The path from graduation to employability has been made easier for Malaysian students studying in New Zealand with findings from the [New Zealand Qualifications Authority](#) and the [Malaysian Qualifications Agency](#) showing comparability of master's and doctoral degrees. The project fulfils an article in the New Zealand-Malaysia Free Trade Agreement, signed in October 2009, which requires that both countries recognise qualifications from the other country, and follows a 2012 pilot project comparing bachelor degrees.
8. [UK: What we know so far about university reform.](#) Will the TEF be rushed? Will HEFCE go down swinging? Is the Office for Students nothing more than spin? The experts have their say. The closure of struggling universities and risks to the UK's international reputation were among the concerns raised at Universities UK's [conference](#) about sector reforms.
9. [Divert more university students into further education, report says.](#) English universities are failing to develop 'quite basic' skills among students, according to a [new report](#) commissioned by the government, which says many young people would be better off taking further education courses than studying for a degree.



[Seeking Soft Power, China Expands Activities in Arab Higher Education.](#)

Seeking 'soft power' in the Arab world, China is setting up educational collaborations to invest in the Arab world's scientific and technical workforce. These aims were outlined in what is being called the Chinese government's first Arab policy paper, [published earlier this month](#). China's renewed interest in the region has drawn a mixed response, ranging from caution to warm welcome.

10. [Lessons from Scandinavia on the Value of Tuition Fees.](#) Whenever you hear somebody complaining about higher education funding in Canada, it's usually only a matter of time before someone says 'why can't we be more like Scandinavia?' You know, higher levels of government funding, no tuition, etc., etc. Here are a couple of stories that may make you rethink some of your philo-Nordicism.

Big Data, Analytics & Technology

11. [Big Data's Coming Of Age In Higher Education.](#) There was a lot of hype around big data in higher education in 2015. Colleges and universities, inundated with data from legacy systems and incentivised by renewed accountability pressures, have begun to link disparate information from across the campus.

Credentialing

12. [Is business about to disrupt the college accreditation system?](#) The US Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business organisation, is the latest major player to recommend steps that could lead to a radical restructuring of higher education in America. The Chamber's non-profit affiliate issued a [report](#) last week arguing that employers should establish their own 'talent supplier recognition and certification system'—essentially, an alternative to the traditional college and university accreditation system.
13. [5 vital focus areas to make postsecondary credentials a success.](#) What will it take to make credentialing an easier process for students? How can education stakeholders validate credentials? What do employers need from today's credentials? How can minority learners better take advantage of credentials? These are just some of the issues addressed in a new report from [Lumina Foundation](#) concerning the [Connecting Credentials](#) partnership, which aims to address problems that hamper students' efforts to attain high-quality credentials in the current higher education system.

Competency Based Education

14. [Higher education competency-based education looks like this.](#) According to a new national survey of over 170 diverse institutions across the US, nothing is more important to a competency-based education program than designing 'measurable and meaningful assessments'. And nothing presents more of a challenge to these programmes than needing data systems that are automated and compatible with one another. These are just two findings from a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation-funded, and Public Agenda produced, [report](#) on what competency-based education programmes look like across the country.

15. [Pearson unveils CBE playbook.](#) Higher education research firm Eduventures estimates that by 2020, competency-based education (CBE) has the potential to grow to as many as 750 programmes with more than 500,000 students at US colleges and universities. To support this growing trend, Pearson has launched the [CBE Playbook](#)—a framework to help higher education leaders think about, organise, and manage the many phases and decisions involved in developing a successful CBE program.

Graduate Outcomes

16. [What did they do? The field of study of New Zealand domestic graduates 2011–14.](#) The distribution of graduates at Level 1 and 2 certificates by field of study showed relative volatility over time, with an increase in graduates in the 'mixed field' programme field. Changes in the content and provision of this level of qualification, such as an increased focus on foundation-level learning, are likely factors in this pattern.
17. [Penguin ditches degree requirement for job applicants.](#) The publisher's attempt to open employment opportunities to a more diverse range of candidates follows a similar step by Ernst & Young. Global publishing group Penguin Random House will no longer require candidates for new jobs to have a university degree, it has announced. The company said it wanted to open up opportunities to attract more varied candidates into publishing, an industry that has been criticised for its [lack of diversity](#).
18. [Asian HE expansion 'producing more graduates than the market needs'.](#) The rapid expansion and privatisation of higher education in Asia has led to problems around graduate employment and social mobility, according to the Vice-President of a Hong Kong university. Joshua Mok Ka-Ho, Vice-President and Chair Professor of comparative policy at Lingnan University, said that the 'massification' of higher education has 'produced more graduates than the market needs today', while increased privatisation prevents access to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

19. [French education minister announces new degree qualifications database.](#) The French education minister has announced plans to create a unique digital database for degree qualifications, which aims to simplify the task of verifying job candidates' academic ability to employers and to save a significant amount of government money.

Online Learning

20. [Blended Learning: The Future Of Higher Education?](#) Universities have long been wrestling with the internet. On the one hand it represents a huge opportunity, in the shape of an enormous resource and new methods of delivery; on the other it represents a huge threat, in the shape of an enormous resource and new methods of delivery. But a pilot program at one of the world's top universities is providing evidence that blended learning could be the future of higher education.
21. [Can MOOCs be a successful alternative for community colleges?](#) First offered in 2011 at Stanford, modern MOOCs were primarily computer science courses made open to anyone with an internet connection. It didn't take long for the concept to catch on, and soon MOOCs were more pervasive and being touted as the future for higher education.
22. [What should MOOC quality standards look like?](#) As more institutions consider offering MOOCs for credit, often the MOOCs provided by third-party platforms, researchers say it's imperative to gauge instructional and design effectiveness...but how, and with what quality standards?
23. [The Limits of Open.](#) Coursera's decision to charge learners in some massive open online courses up front—viewed by some as inevitable—has critics asking if the MOOC provider is diverging from its mission of universal access. As Coursera tweaks its business model to find a financially viable way to offer massive open online courses, critics say its MOOCs are becoming less open and less like courses.

24. [The Open University at 45: What can we learn from Britain's distance education pioneer?](#) Forty-five years ago, when Britain's Open University began broadcasting its first lectures over BBC television and radio, there were many reasons to discount its importance. For one thing, the concept of providing higher education at a distance wasn't new: the first correspondence course, teaching shorthand, was offered in the 1700s; the University of London began offering distance-learning degrees to students around the world in the mid-19th century.

[MOOC watch: Low cost business courses from top universities.](#)

US massive open online course provider Coursera has launched several new suites of business courses, on topics that include entrepreneurship and business modelling (from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania), human resource management (from the University of Minnesota), coaching for managers (from the University of California Davis) and marketing (from IE Business School).

25. [India is top target for online universities.](#) India, with its huge education-hungry population, is the prime target of one of the world's biggest online university providers. Coursera, with 17 million registered students and free online courses from 140 universities, wants to be part of India's drive to expand access to higher education.

Rankings, Ratings and Benchmarking

26. [The flaw in the world-class university paradigm.](#) Many have criticised the pernicious effects of global university rankings. Nonetheless, the same rankings are perhaps the most powerful tool influencing national higher education policies around the world. Without any sound alternative vision for higher education, many governments pour huge resources into elite national universities so that they can have one 'World-Class University' or more.
27. [Is benchmarking more useful than ranking?](#) It is beyond doubt that rankings have become a significant part of the tertiary education landscape, both globally and locally. They have risen in importance and proliferated in unimaginable ways. Rankings have become commercialised and, with this, so has the sophistication of the companies and organisations that rank colleges and universities.

28. [Measure of Internationalisation?](#) The new [International Outlook Ranking \(IOR\)](#), also referred to as the International Universities Ranking, presents quite a different list than the overall World University Rankings (WUR). Very few universities ranked high in one are also listed high in the other—14 out of the top 25 in the WUR list (six American, six UK, one Canadian, and one Swiss university) are also ranked in the IOR.
29. [Top 15 universities in the Arab world announced.](#) Saudi Arabia is the top performer in a snapshot ranking for universities in the Arab region, based on data from the [Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2015–16](#). King Abdulaziz University is first place in the top 15 table, while its national rivals King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals and King Saud University are third and fourth respectively.
30. [Why the OECD Wants a Global Effort to Measure Student Learning.](#) The decision about which higher education institution to study at ranks among the more vital ones taken in life, but how those decisions are made—and the basis on which universities are ranked for their education—has now come under fire.

Student Recruitment and Mobility

31. [Is employability data an untapped resource for student recruiters?](#) Research clearly demonstrates that employability and graduate employment outcomes are key considerations for prospective international students in choosing both a destination country and an overseas institution. An expanding field of graduate outcome data now available in many destination countries represents a potential new source of competitive advantage in international student recruiting.
32. [Shifting currencies expected to drive growth for more affordable destinations.](#) Currency values play an important role in shaping demand for study abroad. We are seeing reports of actual and projected shifts in student mobility in response to dramatic (i.e. 30 per cent or more) changes in currency exchange rates.
33. [New report tracks key influencers for international students.](#) A new survey report gathers responses from more than 35,000 prospective international students, largely those in emerging

markets. The survey responses indicate important variations in the types of recruiters—school representatives, agents, alumni—that students trust and that are influential in their study abroad decisions. Download the report [here](#).

34. [The Next Frontier: ROI Evaluation in International Student Recruitment.](#) In the coming decade, institutions of higher education across the US will face two realities now reshaping the enrolment landscape. On the one hand, global demand for international higher education is projected to nearly triple to 8 million students by 2025. On the other hand, a drop in domestic enrolment has already made international student recruitment a financial priority. In this environment, international student recruitment is becoming an increasingly important part of an institution's strategic plan.
35. [New Zealand highlights the two-way opportunities in export education with China.](#) More than 30,000 Chinese students studied in New Zealand in 2014, accounting for 27 per cent of the country's international student population. The US hosts a similar proportion of Chinese students. Its 304,000 Chinese students make up 31.2 per cent of all international students. This year, three Mainland universities have made the top 50 list in the Financial Times' ranking of global MBA programmes for the first time: Shanghai Jiao Tong (ranked 39th), Renmin University of China (43rd) and Fudan University (47th). No doubt these universities will rise further in next year's ranking, and more Chinese universities may make their way into the top 50 list.
36. [Why American Students Are Flocking to Germany—and Staying.](#) The number of Americans studying in Germany has risen sharply, recent figures show, driven in part by the low cost of higher education compared to the United States. More than 10,000 US students are presently enrolled in the country's higher education programmes, according to data from the Institute for International Education. It's an increase of almost nine percent compared to the previous academic year, and 25 percent more than in 2008–09.
37. [US unis offer employment 'guarantee'.](#) A small Catholic university in southern New Hampshire will become the latest college to offer a money-back guarantee of sorts to its students. Rivier University, which has a student population of about 2600, has created

- an 'Employment Promise Program' that will be available to full-time undergraduates starting with the class of 2020. Students are guaranteed to land a job within nine months of graduation or the school will either pay their federally subsidised students loans for up to a year or enrol them in up to six masters degree courses tuition-free.
38. [US overtakes India as first year enrolments drop in UK](#). The number of first-year non-EU enrolments to UK higher education providers has fallen by three per cent, according to new [data](#) released by the Higher Education Statistics Agency. The data, from the academic year 2014–15, also shows that for the first time there are now more first-year enrolments from the US than from India.
 39. [Harvard faces call to scrap \\$US60,000 tuition fees](#). As universities debate raising tuition fees, America's best-known higher education institution is considering scrapping them. Five candidates standing for seats on Harvard's board of overseers have proposed using money from the university's \$US37.6 billion (\$54.8 billion) endowment to allow students to attend free of charge.
 40. [US Higher Education Institutions Awarding the Most Financial Aid to International Undergraduate Students](#). Over the last decade, there's been a notable rise in the number of higher education institutions awarding financial aid and the amount awarded to international degree-seeking undergraduate students.
 41. [How a Little-Known Program for Foreign Students Became Embroiled in a Hot-Button National Debate](#). Thousands of foreign students could be forced to leave the United States if a challenge to an obscure federal program is not resolved in the next few weeks. The program, [Optional Practical Training](#), has become the latest flash point in the contentious debate over immigration. It just might be the biggest controversy you've never heard of—even if you're on a college campus.
 42. [US most searched-for destination, UK loses share](#). The US was the most searched for study destination of 16 million enquiries made on the global search platform, [Hotcourses](#), last year, according to a first-of-its kind report released by the company. The UK was the second most searched for destination, claiming 27.2 per cent of the searches. Australia followed with 17.2 per cent.
 43. [US students eye universities 'at a reduced price' in Canada](#). Hundreds of thousands of international students flock to Canadian universities each year. But prospective students from the US may find Canadian schools even more enticing this year thanks to the low loonie. That's good news for Canada's universities and local economies, but it could make it more difficult for Canadian applicants to get acceptance letters from some schools.
 44. [Harvard report aims to improve college admissions](#). A new [report](#) issued by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and supported by scores of other institutions, offers recommendations intended to ease the pressure of the college admissions process and encourage a more level playing field.
 45. [International Undergraduate Students: The UK's Competitive Advantage](#). This research from the UK HE International Unit is the first of three reports on the UK's position in relation to comparator countries in international student recruitment and satisfaction. Download the document [here](#).
 46. [UK Tier 1 Post-Study Work Visa will not be re-introduced](#). As expected, the UK government has said it will not be re-introducing the Tier 1 Post-Study Work Visa, a decision that the Scottish government has described as 'deeply disappointing and damaging.'
 47. [Universities Scotland: cost of PSW loss £250m](#). In a paper released this month, Universities Scotland estimated that 5,400 fewer international students have come into the country in the last three years than if the Tier 1 route had stayed in place. The loss of the UK's two year post-study work visa has cost the Scottish economy over £250m since the programme ended in 2012, Universities Scotland has said.
 48. [Ireland implements student immigration and quality assurance reforms](#). Over the course of 2015, the Irish government began to introduce a number of reforms in its student immigration system, with the goal of strengthening quality assurance in recruitment and programme provision for international students. The main feature of the reforms has been the introduction of the Interim List of Education Providers ([ILEP](#)), an updated version of the ILEP was published on 20 January.
 49. [Norway cheapest university destination](#). Norway has been named the cheapest country for UK students to undertake university study, according to new data from FairFX, travel money and international payment service provider. Australia meanwhile has been named the most expensive.
 50. [Surge of Chinese Students Studying Abroad Could Ebb](#). Universities have banked on a steady influx of wealthy Chinese students ever since enrolment numbers began rising about eight years ago. But many are bracing for change as China's slowing economy and devalued currency hits personal income, and as universities within China improve and attract more students.
 51. [China: 100 agents certified by BOSSA, ICEF](#). The agent training course launched last year by the [Beijing Overseas Study Services Association](#) and [ICEF](#) has certified more than 100 Chinese education agents in its first year, the organisations have announced.
 52. [China: More options for foreign students](#). International students will have more opportunities for internships, to take part-time jobs and even to start their own businesses in certain regions of Beijing, under a series of new policies starting on 1 March.
 53. [With poor job prospects for Chinese students, is it still worth investing in a US education?](#) The number of Chinese students in the US rose from 81,127 in 2007–08 to 304,040 in 2014–15, an increase of 275 per cent in seven years, according to the Institute of International Education. With this unprecedented rise of international students came the challenges of integrating them and satisfying academic, social and career expectations. Many institutions have struggled to adapt.
 54. [Hong Kong's outbound numbers continue to rise](#). Hong Kong remains an important and popular study destination within Asia and is projected to have an excess of university spaces, relative to local demand, for the first time this year. Even so, there have been some indications of increasing demand for study abroad in recent years, particularly in terms of significant year-over-year growth of Hong Kong enrolment in the UK and Australia.

55. [Saudi scholarship programme to sharpen focus on top universities](#). The Saudi government is moving aggressively to cut spending this year on the heels of a US\$100 billion deficit in 2015. The Saudi government has introduced a cap on pre-academic language studies in the US. The government has also recently announced new eligibility requirements for students who apply for funding after enrolling in institutions abroad; those students must now be in one of the world's top 50 academic programmes in their field or one of the world's top 100 universities.
56. [Russia: Rectors expect sharp rise in foreign student numbers](#). The number of foreign students studying in Russian universities could significantly increase during the next several years, mainly due to a sharp devaluation of the Russian currency, the rouble, against the dollar and euro, caused by the financial crisis in Russia.
57. [Nigerian interest in UK down while US and Canada rises, says pan-Africa search portal](#). [StudySearch](#), a university application platform catering mostly to international students from Africa, has found that its enquiries from Nigerian students looking to go to university in the UK decreased by 65 per cent between 2014 and 2015. Meanwhile, enquiries to the US and Canada on the platform have risen by 30 per cent in the same period and interest in other destinations, including China, is increasing.
58. [Falling oil prices put Nigerian scholarship funding in doubt](#). Declining oil prices have placed significant pressure on federal and state budgets in Nigeria, and this has raised questions about the stability of scholarship funding for Nigerian students abroad. As many as 40 per cent of Nigerian students have some level of scholarship funding for their studies abroad, and many of these programmes are funded in turn by the country's oil and gas revenues.
59. [Indian government proposes opening up IITs to foreign students](#). Foreign students could soon be permitted to study at prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology, due to a new proposal from the Human Resource Development Ministry that it hopes will attract more international students and raise the country's standing in global academic league tables.
60. [Crash in Oil prices puts Saudi Higher Education in crisis](#). For many years, oil has been big business in Saudi Arabia, since the Kingdom is home to 18 per cent of the world's proven petroleum reserves and ranks as the substance's largest global exporter. But over the past 18 months, falling prices of oil have turned the region from one of the world's wealthiest countries and providers of student scholarships, into one of the most struggling competitors within the global marketplace.
61. [Brazil: study abroad exempt from new overseas payment tax](#). Study abroad programmes will be exempt from a new 25 per cent tax on overseas payments that was [recently announced](#), the Department of Federal Revenue has announced, prompting a sigh of relief among stakeholders that send and receive Brazilian students abroad.
62. [Chile: Free tuition for students from 50 per cent poorest families](#). As the Chilean saying goes, this New Year arrived with a bread loaf under its arm for the almost 200,000 students that will be attending university for free at the start of the new academic year this March. The law granting free education to students from the 50 per cent poorest families was approved by both Houses of Parliament on 23 December.
63. [Malaysia: Severe cuts for overseas scholarships in revised budget](#). Government Scholarships for Malaysian students to study overseas have been slashed in a revised budget just announced by Prime Minister Najik Razak, as the country suffers from a continued economic downturn, depreciating currency and a global drop in oil prices. The previous budget for 2016 announced in October 2015 already [hit higher education hard](#).
64. [Turkish universities intend to woo more Chinese students](#). At a Eurasian international higher education summit held in Istanbul, representatives of Turkish universities voiced their intentions to increase the number of Chinese students by inking bilateral agreements and seeking closer cooperation with Chinese universities.

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A great way to get involved with the AAIR community is to share your thoughts and ideas. Do you have something you would like to share with your IR colleagues? The next AAIR Newsletter will be published in late March. Please send your contributions to editor@aaair.org.au by Wednesday 20 March.



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