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MELBOURNE

# **Threats and opportunities:**

**Exploring and contrasting the views of leaders from across  
Australian higher education– Discovery**

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# The study

- Project examined the views of leaders in Australian higher education about the major changes in the last 20 years and the future prospects and challengers for the next 20 year.
- Leaders was defined as decision-makers and thought leaders, including university Vice-Chancellors and senior executives, senior bureaucrats, prominent academic leaders and other policy specialists.
- During 2015 and 2016 a total of 114 participants completed an in-depth interview and a survey instrument.



# The sample

Group	N	%
University senior executive	63	55.3
Other higher education leaders	51	44.7
Total	114	100.0

- The **University senior executive** included 22 VCs and 41 other leaders Provosts, DVCs, VPs and PVCs.
- The **Other higher education leaders** included 16 government senior managers, including deputy secretaries, as well as other senior leaders such as the chief scientist and heads of the academies, and senior analysts and lobbyists.



# The survey

- The survey asked them to indicate their assessment of key issues for the future of Australian higher education in the next 10 to 20 years.
- A Likert scale was used, with the following values: 1 = not important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = very important, and 5 = extremely important.
- Survey asked about 32 issues.



# The issues

## **Knowledge Generation**

- Incl. research, grand challenges, industry partnerships, big data, research funding.

## **Knowledge Dissemination**

- Incl. teaching, student outcomes, teaching funding.

## **Application of Knowledge**

- Incl. engagement and third mission, universities addressing the needs of society.

## **Administration**

- Incl. strategic and workforce planning, regulation, governance, role of public funds.

## **Issues Encompassing All Functions**

- Incl. internationalisation, accountability and transparency, diversity, and international rankings



# Priority issue areas

Issue category	Overall ranking	Overall average rating	University senior executives rank	University senior executive average rating	Other leaders rank	Other leader average rating
Issues Encompassing All Functions	1	4.19	1	4.26	1	4.08
Knowledge Generation	2	4.01	2	3.99	2	4.01
Application of Knowledge	3	3.9	4	3.93	3	3.87
Knowledge Dissemination	4	3.88	3	3.94	4	3.8
Administration	5	3.64	5	3.73	5	3.53



# Comparing university senior executives with other leaders

## University senior executives

1. Internationalisation of higher education
2. Student learning outcomes
3. Universities addressing the needs of society
4. University-industry research collaborations
5. University strategic planning
6. Balance between tenured, contract and casual faculty
7. University partnerships with other organisations
8. Commonwealth government budget support
9. Addressing grand challenges
10. Student access to university

## Other leaders

1. Student learning outcomes
2. Internationalisation of higher education
3. Universities addressing the needs of society
4. University strategic planning
5. Maintaining and developing research infrastructure
6. University-industry research collaborations
7. University partnerships with other organisations
8. Addressing grand challenges
9. Commonwealth government budget support
10. University accountability and transparency



# Areas of greatest difference in rating between groups, ANOVA $p < 0.05$

Issue	Issue rank: University senior executives	Issue rank: Other leaders
University support for start-ups and commercialisation	29	22
Student access to university	10	16
Balance between tenured, contract and casual faculty	6	13
Commonwealth government budget support	8	10
Educational technology and online learning	11	15
Role of state governments in supporting universities	31	32





# Conclusions

- University senior executive and other sector leaders, including government leaders, had largely aligned responses.
- Addressing the needs of society and grand challenges highly rated.
- Student experience, including internationalisation, a key focus of leaders.
- Strategic planning, and especially workforce planning, a central concern. Public funding important but less so than many other issues.



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**Thank you**

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