

***Dynamic Dons Down Under:
Academics' Work and Identities in One Australian
'Enterprise' University in the Early 21st Century***

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**Paper presented to the Research Centre of the Institute of Education,
Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, United Kingdom**

22 September 2004

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- **Background information about Central Queensland University (CQU)**
- **Conceptual framework: academics' work and 'enterprise' universities**
- **The commercialisation and internationalisation of university teaching and learning**
- **Changes and constants in students' attrition and retention**
- **The application and impact of online learning management systems in and on universities**
- **The promotion of the scholarship of university teaching and learning**
- **Policy formation by the Australian Government and CQU**
- **Implications for the work and identities of dynamic dons down under (and maybe elsewhere as well)**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT CQU

- **A richly diverse and organisationally complex institution**
- **Former college of advanced education; a university since 1992**
- **Five Central Queensland campuses for domestic students (Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton)**
- **Four east coast campuses for international students (Brisbane, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Sydney)**
- **Overseas teaching sites for international students (China, Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore)**

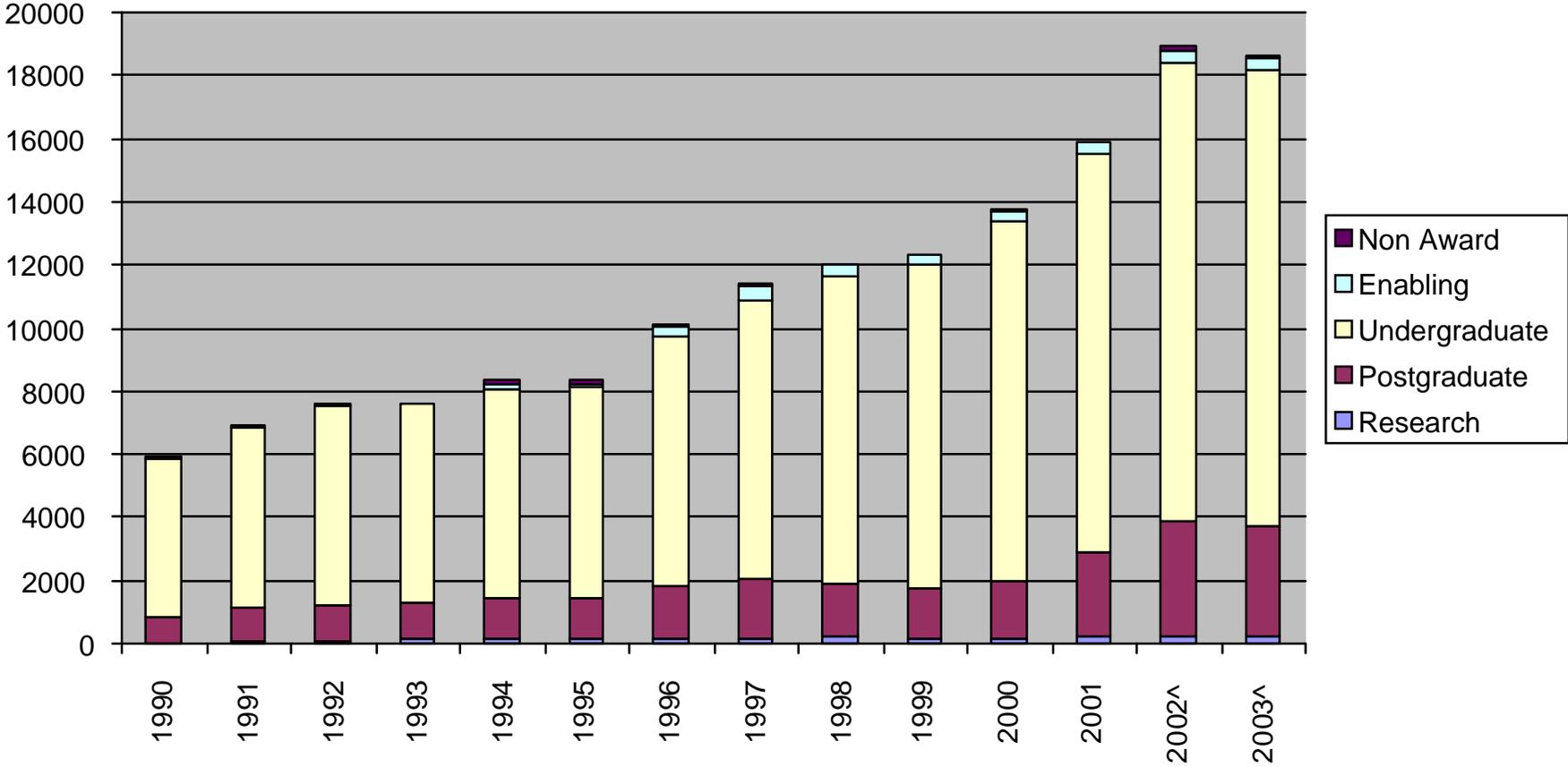
CQU's Australian campuses (Luck, Jones, McConachie & Danaher, 2004, p. 3)



CQU's overseas teaching sites (Luck, Jones, McConachie & Danaher, 2004, p. 4)



CQU's growing and shifting student cohorts (McConachie, Danaher, Luck & Jones, under review, p. 4)



- **In 2001, CQU's students were:**

- **49.8% mature age; 50.2% school leavers**
[in 2003 commencing undergraduates were respectively 83% mature age and 17% school leavers]
- **2.3% Indigenous**
- **34.1% international [nearly 50% in 2002]**
[international programs managed by a commercial agent; staff members have different working conditions and circumstances]
- **42.2% distance education**
- **79.5% undergraduate; 18.1% postgraduate**
- **37.7% low socio-economic background**

- **Two positioning statements about CQU:**

- **“CQU supports the principles developed by the emerging group of New Generation Universities” (Hancock, 2002, p. 7)**
- **“CQU’s...vision is to be a unified university, acknowledged universally as a leader in flexible teaching and learning and well-focused research, contributing strongly to the sustainable development of the regions and communities in which it operates” (Hancock, 2002, p. 4)**

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ACADEMICS' WORK AND 'ENTERPRISE' UNIVERSITIES

- One conceptual framework (adapted from Winter & Sarros, 2002, p. 243):

Independent Variables:

Demographic Variables:

- Personal characteristics
- Professional characteristics

Work Environment Perceptions:

- Role stress
- Job characteristics
- Supervisory style
- Organisation structure

Dependent Variables:

Work Attitudes:

- Job Involvement
- Organisational
Commitment

- **Another conceptual framework:**

Competing discourses and multiple subjectivities (hence ‘dynamic dons’)

- **[D]iscourse is understood not simply as a form of language or as language in use, but [also] as a social practice through which people are inducted into ways of valuing, stances and points of view which reflect and produce the interests of a group. By these means, discourses construct particular forms of social identities, or subjectivities – and any one person may inhabit a number of discourses, taking up therefore a range of subject positions and ways of being. (Morgan, 2002, n.p.; cited in Elsdon, 2004, p. 68)**

- **Marginson (2002, n.p.) listed the key features of the 'enterprise' university as follows:**
 - **Strong executive control with presidential-style leadership, bearing significant institutional autonomy and capable of strategic initiative, and mediating much or most the relationships between on one hand the external world (government, professions, civil society), on the other hand the internal world of the academic units;**
 - **University missions, governance and internal administration (including quality assurance and performance regimes) that are increasingly business-like in character, though the University does not become simply another business;**
 - **The increasing marginalisation of traditional academic governance – academic boards, faculty assemblies and the like – and its partial**

- replacement by executive groups, and new semi-formal and informal IT-based mechanisms for communication and top-down consultation;
- **A quasi-market 'economy' within the University, that combines (1) performance-regulated allocations and zero-sum competition, and (2) external earnings, driven by under-funding, in fees, research and consultancy services and other forms of 'soft income', (3) growing resource inequalities between disciplines;**
 - **External enterprise, in which the University makes selected developmental forays designed to build student market share, position the institution in regional development or among professional communities, establish international partnerships and consortia or establish income streams in the domestic business sector. Parts of the external earnings regime (e.g. international education in Australia)**

have become frankly entrepreneurial and commercial, and this spirit is increasingly influential in the University as a whole, though by no means always dominant;

- **The growing salience of institutional identity *vis a vis* disciplinary identity; and the weakening of academic identity in University organization, with more flexible and generic structures increasingly used in teaching and research, alongside more traditional academic units - and at the extreme, certain erstwhile academic decisions now made by non-academic units e.g. in international recruitment, IT or marketing;**

- **At system level, growing scarcity of public funds and relations of competition between institutions, orchestrated by policy, and a process of isomorphistic closure in which University leaders choose from a restricted menu of developmental strategies (e.g. IT-based initiatives such as on-line courses, full-fee Business education for international students, off-shore campuses, etc.). In a more relentlessly competitive environment, the position of the elite universities seems stronger than before. (2002, n.p.)**

- **The ‘bottom line’ of the Enterprise University is not profit, nor is it teaching and research, nor is it public or community service. It is the competitive position of the institution, grounded in its relative prestige and resources, as *an end in itself*. This is not wholly an ‘entrepreneurial university’, or one entirely powered by ‘academic capitalism’...though those...factors undeniably play a part in sustaining and driving aspects of the enterprise. The term ‘Enterprise University’ captures the spirit of proactive networked engagement, under-pinned by self-referencing identity, which characterises the new kind of non-profit institution in all of its academic, executive and administrative operations. (Marginson, 2002, n.p.; emphasis in original)**

THE COMMERCIALISATION AND INTERNATIONALISATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

- **Five Central Queensland campuses for domestic students (Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton)**
- **Four east coast campuses for international students (Brisbane, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Sydney)**
- **Overseas teaching sites for international students (China, Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore)**
- **Different enterprise bargaining agreements for the Central Queensland and east coast campuses:**
 - **tenure/single contracts vs. multiple parallel contracts with other universities**
 - **campus life vs. shopfront facilities**

- **research vs. tutoring and marking**
- **difficulties of access, communication and coordination**
- **mutual uncertainty about the other's roles and responsibilities**
- **Good intentions and practical outcomes re: the internationalisation of the curriculum:**
 - **The Language Centre's study tours**
 - **Online student teams across national groups**
 - **Introduction to Communication and Culture**
- **Fundamental questions about CQU's communities and constituencies, and which of those are reciprocal and sustainable**

CHANGES AND CONSTANTS IN STUDENTS' ATTRITION AND RETENTION

- **CQU's complexity and diversity matched by conceptions of and attitudes towards student attrition and retention**
- **Some see student attrition as a systemic and institutional 'failure'; others see it as a form of quality assurance and control**
- **Distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' failing grades**
- **Several 'at risk' student categories, with associated programs and strategies**
- **Perceived rise in cases of plagiarism and concerns to promote academic integrity**
- **Perceived rise in student appeals against particular grades**
- **Tension between shared responsibility for enhancing and maximising teaching and learning quality and scholarship and a 'one size fits all' solution to a multifaceted phenomenon**

THE APPLICATION AND IMPACT OF ONLINE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN AND ON UNIVERSITIES

- **Distinction between enterprise resource planning systems (ERPs) and shadow systems**
- **Distinction between teleological and ateleological approaches to systems development (Introna, 1996)**
- **Distinction between course and learning management systems**
- **Move from WebCT to Blackboard, with Webfuse still operating**
- **Many academics have embraced online learning's potential for promoting interaction and 'authentic' assessment**
- **Some concern about inflexibility, standardisation and lack of 'just in time' training of institutional systems associated with Blackboard**
- **Competing discourses about academic autonomy and quality assurance**

THE PROMOTION OF THE SCHOLARSHIP OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The goal of promoting:
...[university] teaching as a reflective and informed act of engaging students and teachers in learning [that] is supportive of the aims central to the project of developing a scholarship of teaching. (Trigwell & Shale, 2004, p. 523)
- CQU's Reflective Teachers Group
- CQU's Teaching Scholars
- CQU's Teaching and Learning Showcase
- *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development* (<http://sleid.cqu.edu.au/>), including the peer-mentored REACT section
- Persistence of perception that research and publishing, rather than teaching, are valued and rewarded by universities
- Potential risks associated with untheorised 'evidence-based practice'; hence my colleagues' and my focus on 'strategic scholarship' (Danaher, Harreveld, Luck & Nouwens, 2004)

POLICY FORMATION BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND CQU

The Australian Government

- **Commonwealth Government's 'steering at a distance' (Marcuse, 1993)**
- **The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) (established in 2000; CQU's external audit in 2005)**

AUQA is responsible for:

- **conducting quality audits of self-accrediting Australian higher education institutions and State and Territory Government higher education accreditation authorities on a five yearly cycle;**
- **providing public reports on the outcomes of these audits;**
- **commenting on the criteria for the recognition of new universities and accreditation of non-university higher education awards, as a result of information obtained during the audits of institutions and State and Territory accreditation processes; and**
- **reporting on the relative standards and international standing of the Australian higher education system and its quality assurance processes, as a result of information obtained during the audit process.**

(<http://www.auqa.edu.au/aboutauqa/auqainfo/index.shtml>)

- **The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund**

The Commonwealth will establish a Learning and Teaching Performance Fund in 2006 as a means of promoting excellence in learning and teaching in higher education institutions. Funds will be allocated on a performance basis to reward institutions which best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching of undergraduates.

Institutions will be assessed on their performance in learning and teaching using a range of methodologies which may include indicators such as student progress and graduate employment outcomes. The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) will be working with the sector on developing the indicators over 2003-2004.

(http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/implementation/learning_teaching.htm#2)

Allocation of the Fund will be determined in two stages.

***Stage 1 will determine an institution's eligibility for funds.* Institutions will be required to demonstrate a strong strategic commitment to learning and teaching through: a current institutional learning and teaching plan or strategy; evidence of systematic support for professional development in learning and teaching for sessional and full-time academic staff; evidence of probation and promotion**

practices and policies which include effectiveness as a teacher; and systematic student evaluation of teaching and subjects that inform probation and promotion decisions for academic positions. Strategies, practices, policies and student evaluation results would be made publicly available on an institution's website. *Stage 2 will assess institutional performance in learning and teaching using a range of measures.* DEST will draft an issues paper forms to inform consultations with the sector over the next 12-18 months. An advisory group of academics and other experts has been formed to provide advice on development of the Fund.

http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/learning_teaching/p_fund_default.htm

- Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

“The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education has been established to provide a national focus for the enhancement of learning and teaching in Australian higher education. It will build on the work of previous programs designed to support teaching and learning in Australian higher education.”

<http://www.autc.gov.au/institute/information.htm>

“The Carrick Institute will provide a national focus for the enhancement of learning and teaching in Australian higher education institutions and will be a flagship for acknowledging excellence in learning and teaching.”

(<http://www.autc.gov.au/institute.htm>)

\$22 million per year from 2006

CQU

- **Multiple communities and constituencies (regional Central Queensland, Australian metropolitan cities, overseas centres)**
- **Potential tensions between engaging with these communities and constituencies and implementing government policy**
- **Potential tensions between ‘public’ and ‘private’ dimensions of CQU’s status as an ‘enterprise’ university**
- **Teaching and Learning Management Plan “the master document”**
- **Student Retention Action Plan**

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WORK AND IDENTITIES OF DYNAMIC DONS DOWN UNDER (AND MAYBE ELSEWHERE AS WELL)

- **“Overestimating change in the short term and underestimating it in the long term is a common phenomenon when revolutions are underway”
(Middlehurst, 2003, p. 3)**
- **Middlehurst’s four kinds of boundary crossings: “private and public, for-profit and not-for-profit education: combining ‘public good’ and ‘private gain’ organizational structures and forms of provision” (p. 5)**
- **Marginson’s (2002) focus on ‘enterprise’ university (eg, changing patterns of governance, internal and external enterprise, institutional vs. academic identities)**

- **The alignment of these factors and forces creates lots of ‘challenges’ and ‘threats’ to academics’ work and identities, as seen through competing discourses and multiple subjectivities**
- **At the same time, lots of ‘uncanny openings’ and ‘strategic uncertainties’ (Stronach & MacLure, 1997) in that work and those identities**
- **The possibility of different and more enabling kinds of dynamism and enterprise for CQU (and other) academics in the early 21st century**

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