PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Project: “Research Project - Profiling diversity of providers in the Australian Vocational Education and Training Sector”

Introduction

Australia’s vocational education and training (VET) sector contains a diverse mix of public and private institutions, providing a range of training programs. This diversity helps the VET sector meet the needs of a variety of industry sectors and student backgrounds. However, to date there has been no comprehensive study of diversity within the sector. The purpose of this project is to profile institutional diversity within the VET sector. Your institution has been invited to participate in this project due to being one of the top-100 largest VET providers, based on the number of students enrolled using public funds. The format of the report will be consistent with the LH Martin Institute’s, 2013 research briefing, *Profiling diversity of Australian universities,*¹ and cover five broad dimensions:

- Teaching and learning;
- Student profile;
- Applied research, industry collaboration, partnerships;
- International orientation; and
- Context.

The project is coordinated by the LH Martin Institute (LHMI), which is hosted by The University of Melbourne and was established to work with the tertiary sector across Australia, with the objective of building institutional capacity. The LHMI provides contextualised training and development for leaders and managers within the tertiary sector. The LHMI also has a public advocacy role in research and commentary, and the delivery of public and bespoke professional development.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has agreed to be a partner in the project, and TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) and the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) are both actively supporting the process. The Commonwealth VET Reform Taskforce has also been briefed about the project and will provide input into the report stage.

NCVER have supplied data by the top-100 providers, but data for three dimensions is largely outside its scope, in particular:

- Applied research, industry collaboration, partnerships;
- International orientation; and
- Context.

Therefore, we are seeking supplementary institutional data on the above dimensions from each participating institution. The project has also been approved by the University of Melbourne’s Human Research Ethics Committee (Program ref 1443316.1).

What will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to provide supplementary institutional data on each of the five broad dimensions covered in our report via an online questionnaire. You will also be provided with a paper-based or PDF version of the questionnaire to assist with your internal collection and verification of data. The questionnaire contains approximately 20 questions, but total time commitment will vary by institution depending on organizational structure and internal communication processes. We recommend institutions expect a total time commitment of approximately 5 hours.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

We intend to protect the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. The raw data will be kept securely by the LH Martin Institute on its internal server and remotely on the password protected site used to collect the data ([www.questionpro.com](http://www.questionpro.com)). The raw data will remain the property of the LH Martin Institute and will not be available to persons outside the project team. However, given that the purpose of the data collection is to facilitate institutional comparisons and profiles, raw data will be converted into ordinal scales (e.g. quartiles, quintiles, deciles, etc.) for each institution. These institutional profiles will be presented in the project report, research briefing and related public dissemination documents.

How will I receive feedback?
Once the supplementary institutional data has been collected, all participating organisations will be provided with the draft briefing and an invitation to provide further comment before the final briefing is released. The research briefing will be made available on the LH Martin Institute’s website. To ensure that the VET sector gains maximum benefit from the project, it is likely that the institutional data (in its ordinal format) will be available on the LH Martin Institute’s website for benchmarking and secondary analysis.

Will participation prejudice me in any way?
Please be advised that your participation in this project is completely voluntary. Institutions choosing not to participate will not be prejudiced in their relationship with the LH Martin Institute or any of the project partners. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. For completeness and comparability, it is preferable that institutions provides data for all questions. However, if for any reason this is not possible, you are also free to provide partial responses.

Where can I get further information?
Should you require any further information, assistance or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our Associate Director, Associate Professor Ruth Schubert on 03 9305 6042 or ruth.schubert@unimelb.edu.au, or our Research Fellow, Peter Bentley on 03 8344 0617 or peter.bentley@unimelb.edu.au. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

How do I agree to participate?
If you would like to participate, please complete the questionnaire on the URL contained in your letter of invitation and click “I accept” to the terms outlined in the introductory page.

Project Team

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