
Introduction

In late 2010 the Institute elected to undertake a process of self-assessment and external review. The intent for this was to examine progress to date and identify issues for consideration in planning the Institute’s next stage of development.

In consultation with Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and following endorsement from the Advisory Board, the Chair formally invited Ms Alison Johns, Head of Leadership, Governance and Management at the Higher Education Funding Council of England, to undertake an external review, in which she was supported by Mr Jim Davidson, former Deputy Secretary Tertiary, Youth and International at DEEWR. The review was completed over February – April 2011 with a substantial series of consultations completed in late February and early March.

The Institute very much welcomes the findings of the review. In particular it is pleased to note the strong support for its activities throughout its establishment phase as cited at the beginning of the report: “LH Martin Institute needs to be acknowledged and praised for what they have achieved”. Below the Institute provides its key reactions to the main points in the review. It will take these further in a strategic planning process over the next six months, which will include further consultation with its key stakeholders, charting the Institute’s next phase of development.

Future Strategy

The Institute supports the review’s emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency, the academic workforce and the potential shift from competition to (international) collaboration. It also supports a focus on effective implementation as a cornerstone of its activities. The Institute proposes to address these issues under the umbrella of “Making a Difference” thereby emphasizing its intention to directly affect institutional operations in its next phase of development.

The Institute initially has aimed at focussing its VET activities at the larger, dual sector TAFE’s. As such it very much welcomes the support for this as expressed in the review report. It will continue to work in close partnership with both TDA and the TAFE Development Centre as these partnerships are proving to be productive, and supports the emphasis on management and engagement at the senior VET level.
The Institute appreciates the comments concerning the dangers of "strategic drift". However, from its inception, and contrary to the suggestion made in the report, the need to ground education and training into ongoing research has been emphasized, supported by the Advisory Board, and the Institute’s research activities have been carefully balanced with its education and training brief and have been selectively focussed.

Furthermore, such research has been key to recent growth in the Institute’s profile in the tertiary sector and is inextricably linked to the “deep understanding of the tertiary education context” which the Report identifies as the Institute’s unique selling point.

The Institute aims to continue this focus with an increased emphasis on “research and development” in line with the “Making a Difference” motto. It will aim to continue to engage in applied research from which concrete products and change strategies can be derived and implemented across the tertiary education sector. Given its funding basis, the Institute finds it difficult to envisage a role for itself as “intelligent commissioners of research” even though from time to time it has played such a role. However, given perceptions on this issue there clearly is a need to better articulate the rationale behind and approach to the Institute’s research strategy.

**Pedagogical model**

Whilst not wanting to be locked in to one overarching model for leadership, governance and management on the belief that such a model does not exist and would undermine the core concepts of diversity and contextualisation in tertiary education, the Institute is receptive to the suggestions made regarding a move towards the “organisational model” with a greater emphasis on bespoke programs and consultancy. It intends to maintain its award programs and where possible expand these through on-line provision to increase their contribution to both mission and bottom line. But it recognises the increased demand for bespoke programs.

**Impact and evaluation**

The Institute is very pleased with the positive outcomes associated with its activities over the first period. It recognises the need for a further expansion of its evaluative work, and appreciates the constructive suggestions made in this respect acknowledging at the same time the difficulty of the “causal chain” argument. A clear emphasis on the impact of its work will be incorporated in the Institute’s new strategic plan.

**Relationships and engagement**

Whilst appreciative of the positive comments made, the Institute recognises the need for a continued strategic engagement with the sector. It aims to continue and expand its partnerships with ATEM, IEAA, TDA, TDC and UA. The Institute will reassess its communication strategy in line with suggestions made in the review.
**Self sustainability and Value for Money**

Whilst not necessarily agreeing to the review’s suggestion that there are issues as regards the efficiency of its operation, the Institute is acutely aware that perceptions are realities for its key stakeholders. A more detailed pricing and volume review will be undertaken, although current data suggest that the Institute is on par with other providers in the market. The Institute will explore the further use of technology to overcome the tyranny of distance as indicated in the review, realising that these investments come at a cost. Crucially, the Institute will aim to translate its unique selling point, identified in the review as being its deep understanding of the tertiary education context into a viable value for money proposition in the strategic plan for its second phase.