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# **The Work Roles of Academics in Australian Universities**

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## Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by DETYA as part of an ongoing project monitoring the changing work roles and values of the academic profession in Australia. The study essentially replicates some key aspects of the 1993 national survey conducted by the CSHE. It focused on workloads, levels of satisfaction, key aspects of teaching and research activities, and work preferences. The main purpose of this investigation was to identify trends in the work roles and outlooks of academics in Australian universities over the last five years. Some international comparisons are made where possible.

The report is based on the responses of 2 609 academics from 15 Australian universities across five states to a survey conducted in the first quarter of 1999. The unusually high response rate of 58.4 per cent is an indicator of the importance attached to the issues of work roles and workloads by academics at the present time.

The level of commitment remains high in the profession with 75 per cent saying they are more motivated by intrinsic interests in their work than by material rewards, and 51 per cent agreeing that they subordinate most aspects of their lives for their work. However, since 1993 a number of aspects of academic roles, outlooks and sources of satisfaction have changed:

- while most academics (73%) have an interest in both teaching and research, the proportion who say they have a much stronger interest in research than in teaching has increased from 35 per cent to 41 per cent;
- the level of general job satisfaction has dropped from 67 per cent to 51 per cent, and there has been significant increase in the proportion who say their job is a source of considerable stress (from 52% to 56%);
- the low overall level of job satisfaction is reflected in the low levels of satisfaction with salary and key work conditions. Satisfaction with salary has declined from a low base of 37 per cent in 1993 to just 31 per cent in 1999. Likewise, and perhaps more noteworthy, is the significant drop in satisfaction with job security from 52 per cent to 43 per cent; and
- there has been a major decline in a primary source of satisfaction for academics: the opportunity to pursue their own academic interests. This has dropped from 66 per cent in 1993 to 53 per cent in 1999.

Some major findings concerning workloads were:

- the average working hours have increased since 1993 from 47.7 to 49.2 hours per week, but perhaps more importantly, 55 per cent of the sample believed their hours had *substantially* increased over the last five years;
- 40 per cent of academics now work more than 50 hours per week; and
- the proportion of time spent on teaching each week has declined slightly over the last five years from an average of 53.0 to 48.7 per cent. The time

spent on administration has increased significantly from 6.4 hours per week to 8.4 hours. These activities now comprise 17.1 per cent of the working week and are widely regarded as a serious distraction from the core activities of teaching and research.

The negative experiences and outlooks are not shared evenly across the system. There is some diversity in the responses according to institutional type, field of study, gender, and career stage. For example:

- A notably higher proportion of females are stressed and say they give up more of their lives to their work. Females are, however, more likely to say their job satisfaction has improved over the last five years. On the other hand, females are much less likely than males to be satisfied with the opportunities they have to pursue their own academic interests;
- The contrasts between early, mid and late career academics stand out on a range of dimensions, but especially on job satisfaction and outlooks. While the late career academics are by far the most negative, mid-career academics are distinguished by the fact that they are far more likely than the other two groups to be stressed and overworked.

Large numbers of academics are in the process of making major changes in their teaching roles:

- Two-thirds report that developing course materials for new technologies has had a major impact on their changing work hours;
- They are typically facing the demands of change in teaching with little or no formal training. Most learn as they go. About one third had some training at the beginning of their careers and only a quarter had engaged in some professional development for teaching in the two years prior to the survey.
- However, the motivation to improve teaching is influenced by the perception of the rewards system. Most academics would prefer to see teaching and research given equal status in promotion criteria. Most (91%) still see research as prevailing in the reward system of their own universities in contrast to teaching (44%).

The shifts in work values, roles and outlooks have important implications for national and institutional policy. It has been widely held that the workloads of academics have increased along with unacceptably high levels of associated dissatisfaction and stress. It has also been observed that the nature of academic work is changing radically in the face of new demands on the higher education sector. The management of academic work is one of the biggest challenges facing Australian universities. We have reached a point, in common with higher education systems around the world, where a creative reassessment of academic work roles and expectations is needed.

# 1. Introduction

Anecdotal reports since the Centre for the Study of Higher Education conducted its last national survey of academics suggested there had been a marked acceleration in changes to academic work. This study was commissioned by DETYA to investigate the ways in which academics in Australia are responding to the increasingly complex demands made on their time and energy. The pressure to improve the quality of teaching in Australian universities has been compounded by the growth in student numbers and the expectation that new technologies and more flexible modes of delivery will be widely used. Alongside this, academics are now operating in a far more competitive environment where the drive to initiate and conduct research and consultancies has given a new edge to the potential tension between teaching and research.

The primary purpose of the study was to examine trends in academic work roles and, where possible, to make comparisons with international studies using a national survey questionnaire. The 1999 questionnaire was essentially a short version of the CSHE 1993 instrument (McInnis 1999). It focused on workloads, levels of satisfaction, key aspects of teaching and research activities, and work preferences. Unlike the 1993 survey, it did not explore the broader social and political values of academics, nor did it examine issues about the nature and purposes of universities. As far as possible, items from the 1993 survey were retained in their original form to allow for direct trend analysis. Some new items were adapted from the survey conducted for the Dearing Inquiry into Higher Education in the UK (1996).

The eight-page survey questionnaire was first mailed out via the universities in early February with two follow-up mailouts through March and early April. The sample was drawn from 15 Australian universities across five states. It covered the full range of institutional types, from established research intensive universities to new regional and distance course providers (See Appendix B for details). The 2 609 academics who completed the questionnaire represent a response rate of 58.4 per cent, an exceptionally high level in these times of 'survey fatigue', and particularly given the increasingly strong negative attitudes of academics towards any additional demands on time that distract from their core work.

The sample includes academics across all levels and in the full range of fields of study. Females were slightly over-represented in the sample in comparison to their proportion nationally (38.0% cf 34.5%). As the figures provided in Appendix B suggest, the age profile of the whole sample was comparable to the national profile.

Overall, the more senior ranks of senior lecturer and above are also somewhat over-represented but the general pattern reflects the national proportions (see Appendix B for details).

## **1.1 Reporting on a complex and diverse profession**

The academic profession has been characterised as a collection of ‘small worlds, different worlds’ (Clark 1987). Indeed it has frequently been argued that the internal divides are so strong—especially with respect to disciplines—that it makes little sense to talk about the academic profession as having a collective identity. Nevertheless, the 1993 survey showed a substantial level of consensus on most major issues and suggested that there is a widely shared set of basic sentiments about work motives across the profession (McInnis, Powles and Anwyl 1995). The divides constructed for this report are largely intended to acknowledge some fundamental differences in the predispositions and contexts of academics, and to assist our understanding of the complex and diverse nature of the academic workforce in the Australian Unified National System.

The discussion in this report for the most part focuses on the group of academics defined as the mainstream. This includes only those academics employed full-time who both teach and research (N=1 554). It also includes research fellows who are involved in some teaching. This group comprises 60 per cent of the total sample. In addition to divides by gender, and level of appointment, other sub-samples of the mainstream used in the analysis include career stage, institutional differences, disciplinary fields, casual and part-time workers, and a trend group for the purposes of comparing the 1993 and 1999 data.

### **1.1.1 Career stage**

As with all professionals, academics’ perspectives on work roles change over their careers (McInnis 1996). This inevitable shift in outlooks is perhaps more critical now in the face of the rapid transformation of higher education which includes the prospect of a ‘new generation’ of academics emerging who have a different set of expectations and outlooks (Finkelstein, Seal & Schuster 1998). Three sub-groups are therefore analysed throughout the report on the basis of their years of experience in higher education. ‘Early career’ academics were defined as those with seven years or fewer experience (N=384). The median age of this group is surprisingly high (37 years) with a median of five years experience. This group are of particular interest since although they are not young, it is reasonable to assume that their academic lives have been lived almost entirely in the post-binary era. It is of interest that only 12 per cent of this group are under 30 years and 29 per cent were aged 40-49 years. ‘Mid-career’ academics were defined as those who have 8-20 years experience. Their median age in this survey is 44 years with a median of 12 years experience (N=735). ‘Late career’ academics are those with 21 or more years experience. In this sample they have a median age of 55 and a median of 27 years experience (N=435).

### **1.1.2 Institutional differences**

The sample is also divided for analysis in some instances by a broad classification of institutions according to date of establishment, i.e. four ‘old’ universities, established 1853-1958 (N=462); four ‘middle’ period universities established 1960-1988 (N=450); and seven ‘new’ universities most of which were established from former Colleges of Advanced Education in 1987 (N=604). This is intended,

amongst other things to provide some points of comparison to the pre- and post-binary divisions used in the Dearing commissioned study. It also enables some exploration of differences between academics in research intensive universities and those with stronger traditions of emphasis on teaching and course delivery.

### **1.1.3 Fields of study**

There are substantial variations in the responses of academics from different disciplinary fields on a wide range of issues (see for example, McInnis, Powles & Anwyl 1995). To provide a broad picture of some important differences in work roles, perceptions and outlooks according to discipline, three groups are used to represent the vocational and non-vocational orientations: a Humanities/Social Science group (N=381); an Engineering/Architecture/Agriculture group (N=162); and a Business/Administration group (N=180), hereafter generally abbreviated in the text as the Humanities, Engineering, and Business groups respectively.

### **1.1.4 Part-time and casual staff**

A separate analysis of the sub-sample of part-time and casual staff is provided in Chapter 6. These comprise 17.8 per cent of the total respondents (N=464).

### **1.1.5 Trend analysis group**

Finally a group comprising a large sub-sample of the mainstream is used for comparisons with the CSHE 1993 survey. This group is defined by the 1993 survey as full-time academics at lecturer level B and above, and includes a small proportion (5%) of research fellows (N= 1 610).

## 2. Job satisfaction: Work conditions and careers

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### 2.1 Academics and their work

The attitudes of academics towards their work are perhaps puzzling to the outsider. One feature of academics' work that sets them apart from other professional workers is the level of satisfaction they get from the work itself and the degree of choice they have traditionally had over their work agenda. Few occupations allow for workers to largely follow their interests regardless of whether or not it is of immediate or obvious benefit to the organisation. Academics have been happy to trade off less than adequate work conditions and career benefits for the opportunity to pursue matters they personally define as worthy of investigation. The research on academic work values consistently reporting these work orientations is quite substantial (Altbach 1996; Clark 1987; Finkelstein, Seal & Schuster 1998; McInnis 1996; Weaver 1978).

Further, to understand the work motives of academics it is essential to recognise both the everyday and long-term tensions in the workplace created by the competing demands of research and teaching. It is difficult to find a comparable profession where people are employed and rewarded largely on the basis of their capacity to succeed in what they do for 20–25 per cent of their work time (research), and where activities that take up more than 50 per cent of the time (teaching), have traditionally been undervalued by the reward system.

The survey questionnaire on which this report is based explored aspects of work conditions central to the work preferences, morale, sources of satisfaction, and outlooks of academics. In this chapter the focus is on responses of the mainstream cohort with some additional analysis of the sample by gender, career stage and institutional type where appropriate. Trends in some key motives and sources of satisfaction are noted using the 1993 national survey as a benchmark where items were matched.

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### 2.2 Work preferences

The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with four statements on the strength of their career interest. The data in Table 2.1 shows the extent to which academics are oriented to both teaching and research, or primarily to one or the other. On the five point scale a clear majority of academics profess an interest in both activities. However, while 42 per cent are primarily interested in research, only 21 per cent are primarily interested in teaching. Importantly, 48 per cent do not have a stronger interest in teaching as a career



interest (17% strongly disagree on this item). Considerably fewer are negative about research as a career interest (28%).

Few in this sample show an inclination towards administration as a career goal. Indeed, the extreme response comes from the 63 per cent who are strongly negative in their orientation to administration.

**Table 2.1      Strength of career interest**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	<b>Strongly agree</b>			<b>Strongly disagree</b>	
I have an interest in both teaching and research	53	20	20	5	2
I have a much stronger career interest in research than teaching	15	27	29	18	10
I have a much stronger career interest in teaching than research	8	13	30	31	17
I have a much stronger career interest in administration than in teaching and research	2	4	12	20	63

### 2.2.1      Gender

In data shown in Appendix A, there are notable variations in these career interests by gender and career stage (Tables A1 and A2). While there is no gender difference at all in the proportions interested in both teaching and research (73%), males are inclined to show a stronger interest than females in research than teaching (44% cf 38%) but this is not a statistically significant difference.

### 2.2.2      Career stage

Career stage differences in preference for teaching or research are quite marked, especially between early and later career academics (see Appendix A, Table A1). Early career academics are less likely to have an interest in both teaching and research (66%) than late career (75%) academics. Early career staff are also far more likely than those in late careers to be interested in research than teaching (49% cf 36%).

Although only 21 per cent of the sample overall prefer teaching over research, late career academics are significantly more likely to be interested in teaching than those in the mid-career stage (25% cf 19%) and significantly less likely of all three groups to have a stronger career interest in research than teaching (late 36%, mid 43%, early 49%).

### 2.2.3      Institutional type

The proportion of academics who balance both teaching and research is about the same across the three types of university (see Appendix A, Table A3). The results show some statistically significant contrasts between the old and new universities. Thirty-six per cent of academics in the new universities have a much stronger

career interest in research than teaching, compared with 50 per cent in the old universities. Those in the new universities are also significantly more likely to have a much stronger interest in teaching (26%) than those in the old (15%) and mid-period universities (18%).

### **2.2.4 Field of study differences**

In contrast to the institutional divides, there are no statistically significant differences between the three field of study groups in terms of their career interests. Nevertheless, there are some marginal differences in the proportions 'agreeing' and 'strongly agreeing' to the four options (not shown in tables). Slightly more of the Engineering group said they had an interest in both teaching and research (76% cf Humanities 72% cf Business 71%). Substantially more of the Business group (46%) overall claimed a stronger career interest in research than the Engineering group (36%).

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## **2.3 Level of commitment**

The level of commitment to particular tasks also shows some gender and career stage variations. Respondents were presented with a list of tasks commonly faced by academics and asked to rate on a five point scale the strength of 'commitment to the various tasks in which you may be involved as an academic?'

In Table 2.2 the responses are collapsed to a three point scale and ordered from highest to lowest levels of commitment. Research activity has the highest level of commitment, with thesis supervision, publication of research findings, and undergraduate teaching at similarly high levels as the core of work commitment for most of the sample. However, the level of commitment to research is actually much greater than the collapsed figures suggest since on the five point scale (not shown), the proportion strongly committed to research activity is 64 per cent with strong commitment to undergraduate teaching and postgraduate supervision considerably lower at 52 per cent and 54 per cent respectively.

Despite the pressure of time reported in the following chapter, there is still a high level of commitment to the pastoral care of students (68%). The commitment to community service of 41 per cent is in keeping with the number who believe it should be rewarded in promotions policy (as discussed below). However, at least a quarter of the sample are not committed to community activity.

The commitment to committee work (29%) and administrative work (25%) is very low. Although these may be the tasks that academics love to hate, there is still a noteworthy ambivalence given that more than one-third who responded in the neutral category for both items who no doubt see it as an inevitable and unavoidable chore.

**Table 2.2**      **Strength of commitment to tasks**

(5 point scale 'strongly committed' to 'not committed' collapsed to 3 point scale % responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Committed	Neutral	Not Committed
Research activity	87	9	4
Postgraduate thesis supervision	82	11	7
Publication of research findings	81	12	7
Undergraduate teaching	81	12	7
Pastoral care of students	68	21	11
Presentation of research at conferences	67	20	13
Postgraduate coursework teaching	66	19	15
Community service	41	33	26
Committee work	29	35	36
Administrative work	25	34	41

## 2.4 Work motives, satisfaction and outlooks

The nine items listed in Table 2.3 were selected from the 1993 study to explore some key values that motivate or hinder academics in their work, their levels of satisfaction with their jobs, and their outlooks.

Responses to the first three items in the table suggest that the sample as a whole is overwhelmingly motivated by the work itself. Three quarters say they are more motivated by intrinsic than material rewards—only seven per cent disagree with this sentiment. While this is not particularly surprising, since the statement is something of a leading question, there is nevertheless a high proportion of academics in the sample (51%) who express their altruism through the subordination of most aspects of their life to their work, and who say their work leaves little time to themselves outside work (60%).

**Table 2.3 Motives, outlooks and satisfaction**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Strongly agree			Strongly disagree	
I am more motivated by intrinsic interests in my work than by material rewards	44	31	18	6	1
I subordinate most aspects of my life for my work	19	32	24	17	8
My work commitments leave me very little time to myself	27	33	22	13	5
My job is a source of considerable stress	24	32	23	15	6
My overall satisfaction with my job has improved over the last 5 years	10	19	23	22	25
I am actively seeking a change of job at the moment	8	10	20	19	44
This is not a good time for any young person to aspire to an academic career in my discipline	40	21	16	14	9
If I had the choice again I would choose to be an academic	27	25	22	15	11
Generally speaking I am satisfied with my job	16	35	24	17	8

The second group of three items indicate the level of stress and unease about work for this sample. While more than half the group (56%) regard their job as a source of considerable personal stress, it is noteworthy that 21 per cent do not. The perception of change in job satisfaction over the previous five years shows a substantial proportion of 47 per cent who see no improvement and indeed, a quarter strongly disagree with this item. In contrast, although 29 per cent believed that their job satisfaction had improved, only 10 per cent strongly agreed. However, the level of stress, and the decline in satisfaction, are not strong enough to push these academics to change jobs: 44 per cent are clearly not actively seeking a job, and only 18 per cent indicated they were looking for alternatives.

The responses to the final group of three items provide a snapshot of the prevailing mood of academics in 1999. A standard test of the outlook of the profession on surveys of this type for many years has been the extent to which academics believe it is not a good time for a young person to aspire to an academic career in their discipline. In 1999, a clear majority of academics (61%) are negative in their outlook—and only 23 per cent are positive on this item.

Despite these negative outlooks, high levels of stress, and a sense for many that things are not getting better, slightly more than half the sample (52%) would choose again to become academics, and 51 per cent are still basically satisfied with their jobs. However, around one quarter are not satisfied with their job (25%) and would not choose to be academics if they had the choice again (26%). Given the widespread anecdotal reports of low morale in the profession, the group of eight per cent who are seriously dissatisfied with their jobs is smaller than might be expected.

### **2.4.1 Gender**

On the whole, there are few major differences between males and females in their motives, outlooks and satisfaction. Results (see Appendix A Table A4) suggest that the level of general satisfaction is about the same for males as for females (52% cf 50%), whether they would choose again to become an academic (53% cf 51%), and say they subordinate their lives for their work (54% cf 50%),

Females are less negative about the outlooks for young people entering the profession (54% cf males 64%). Only slightly more males are more motivated by intrinsic than material rewards (76% cf 73%). However, notably more females than males are stressed because of work (61% cf 54%), while substantially more females have little time to themselves because of work commitments (66% cf 57%). More females (33%) than males (28%) say their overall satisfaction has improved over the last five years.

### **2.4.2 Career stage**

Career stage differences are clearly evident with respect to work motives, outlooks and satisfaction. The contrasts mainly show up between early and late career academics. Early career academics are by far generally satisfied with their job (66% cf 48% for mid career and 45% for late career). They are less likely to be motivated by intrinsic interests (70% cf 79% for late career), far more likely to say their overall satisfaction has improved over the last five years (43% cf 19% for late career) and considerably fewer of the new members of the profession are pessimistic about the prospects of young aspiring academics (45% are negative, cf 64% for mid career and 69% for late career).

Mid-career academics stand out in two respects. They are more likely to be considerably stressed by their work (60%) than early (51%) and late career academics (54%). They are also more likely to have little time to themselves because of their work (63% cf 55% for early and 58% for late career academics). On the other hand, late career academics are most notable for their extremely negative response to the item concerning improvement in work satisfaction over the last five years (19% cf 29% for mid-career and 43% for early career).

### **2.4.3 Institutional type**

Variations by institutional type on these aspects of motives, outlooks and satisfaction are not particularly obvious. Table A5 in Appendix A shows only slight differences between the old, mid-period, and new universities. There appear to be slightly lower levels of satisfaction in the 1960–1988 universities (48% cf 53% in both the old and new) and slightly higher levels of stress in the new universities (58% cf 56% in the old and 54% in the mid group).

### **2.4.4 Field of study differences**

The differences in the responses of academics in the three illustrative fields of study is quite marked in some important respects (Table 2.4).

**Table 2.4** Variations in motives, outlooks and satisfaction by selected disciplines

(% agree on 5 point scale collapsing categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree' mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Humanities Social Sciences N=381	Engineering Architecture Agriculture N=162	Business Admin N=180
I am more motivated by intrinsic interests in my work than by material rewards	81	72	66*
I subordinate most aspects of my life for my work	56	49	45*
My work commitments leave me little time to myself	61	67	51*
My job is a source of considerable stress	60	62	42*
My overall satisfaction with my job has improved over the last 5 years	29	26	33
I am actively seeking a change of job at the moment	17	23	16*
This is not a good time for any young person to aspire to an academic career in my discipline	68	60	56*
If I had the choice again I would choose to be an academic	52	48	55
Generally speaking I am satisfied with my job	49	44	56*

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney)

The data show a strong contrast between those in the Humanities group and those in the Business group in terms of the extent to which they are motivated by intrinsic interests (81% cf 66%). The Humanities group also appear to be more inclined to subordinate their lives for their work while the Engineering group are more likely to have less time outside their work. Humanities academics are significantly more likely than those in Engineering to be motivated by intrinsic interests, and certainly more negative about future prospects.

On the whole, those in the Business group are more positive in outlook: they are the significantly less inclined than Humanities to let work take over their lives and by far the least stressed of the three groups; they are significantly (and unsurprisingly) less negative about the opportunities for young people entering the field than those in humanities; and they are more likely to be satisfied with their job than those in the Engineering group. The differences between the groups in terms of improvement in job satisfaction, and making the choice again to become an academic are not significant.

## 2.5 Salary, work benefits and career prospects

The respondents were asked to indicate on a five point scale their level of satisfaction with their salary, benefits and working conditions.

The most notable characteristic of the data shown in Table 2.5 are the relatively low levels of satisfaction with any of the items, and particularly the small proportion of academics who are very satisfied about any of the issues raised. The lowest level of satisfaction is predictably with salaries: only 30 per cent are satisfied and 47 per cent are not. While 42 per cent are satisfied with their job security, 35 per cent are dissatisfied and almost one in five are very dissatisfied.

Study leave and conference attendance have long been considered central contributors to the work and career satisfaction of academics. More than that, these aspects are seen as central to the productivity of academics and, in turn, their opportunities for promotion. A substantial minority are satisfied with the institutional policy in support of these core components of academic work. However, 37 per cent are dissatisfied with conference attendance and travel policy, and 27 per cent dissatisfied with study leave policy.

**Table 2.5**      **Satisfaction with salary and work benefits**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Very Satisfied			Very Dissatisfied	
Your academic salary	7	23	23	24	23
Security of your job	15	27	23	16	19
Study leave policy	16	29	27	15	12
Conference attendance and travel policy	13	27	22	22	15
Opportunity to pursue your own academic interests	21	32	21	17	9

The last item in this table concerns the most crucial factors contributing to the work satisfaction and morale of academics. The opportunity to pursue one's own academic interests is a distinctive work benefit and career attraction for academics. It is certainly the strongest source of satisfaction for this sample with 53 per cent satisfied overall and indeed, 21 per cent very satisfied. While that still leaves just over a quarter not satisfied, it is still one of the few areas where the responses are clearly skewed towards the positive end of the scale.

## 2.5.1 Gender and career stage

Table A6 in Appendix A shows gender and career stage variations in satisfaction with salary and work benefits. There are only two items on which there are notable differences. More females are satisfied with their salaries than males (33% cf 28%), but slightly fewer are happy with study leave policy (43% cf 47%). There is, however, a rather striking difference on one item: females have much more negative perceptions than males of their opportunity to pursue their own academic interests (44% cf 57%).

Some important differences emerge on these items with respect to career stage (see Appendix A Table A6). There is virtually no difference on items concerning satisfaction with salary between the three groups, and likewise on conference and travel policy. However, on job security, although the overall level of satisfaction is low, the pattern is, not surprisingly, clear: the later the career, the more satisfied academics are with their job security. The late career academics are the most

positive (51% cf 42% of mid career and 31% of early career). They are also more positive in their perceptions of their opportunity to pursue their academic interests (57% cf 51% for mid career and 53% for early career).

## 2.5.2 Institutional type and field of study differences

Institutional differences are not especially strong in these matters but some are still noteworthy (see Appendix A, Table A7). In terms of the opportunities to pursue their own academic pursuits, there is greater autonomy in the old (57%) and mid period (55%) universities than in the new (49%). There is somewhat greater satisfaction with study leave policies in the older universities (49% cf 45% in the mid period and 44% in the new universities). Interestingly, the academics in the mid-period universities are the least satisfied with the security of tenure (38% cf 42% for the old and 44% for the new), although the differences between the institutional types is not statistically significant.

**Table 2.6** Satisfaction with salary and work benefits: field of study differences

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Humanities Social Sciences N=381	Engineering Architecture Agriculture N=162	Business Admin N=180
Your academic salary	31	31	22*
Security of your job	41	43	40
Study leave policy	47	51	44
Conference/travel policy	39	37	46
Opportunity to pursue your own academic interests	49	51	57*

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney)

There are no significant differences between the groups shown in Table 2.6 above, in terms of their satisfaction with job security, study and conference leave policy. The Business group are significantly less satisfied with their salary and their study leave policy than the others and significantly more satisfied than academics in the Humanities with their opportunity to pursue their own academic interests.

## 2.6 Reward systems

The perceived importance attached to particular functions by the promotion reward system in principle shapes everyday patterns of work, career planning, and, in turn, influences levels of satisfaction with the overall work environment.

The data shown in Table 2.7 is ranked in the first column according to what academics perceive to be the current criteria for rewards embedded in the promotions policy of their institution. The second column shows what they believe should be rewarded.



An overwhelming majority of those who responded to this item (91%) see research and scholarly activity as the current priority in the reward system. This is followed fairly closely by the ability to attract external funds (82%). These and the two related activities of administrative and leadership skills (59%), and contribution to committees and other administrative work (52%) are well ahead of effectiveness as a teacher (44%) in the perceived rewards system. This rates twice as high as length of service (22%). Community service is considered by 29 per cent as an activity rewarded in promotions.

**Table 2.7      The promotion reward system: realities and preferences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Is now rewarded	Should be rewarded
Research/scholarly activity	91	89
Ability to attract external funds	82	46
Administrative/leadership skills	59	70
Contribution to committees	52	45
Effectiveness as a teacher	44	95
Community service	29	55
Length of service	22	16

In the list of what should be rewarded, some major gaps between realities and preferences appear. In this instance, teaching shifts from fifth place in the current rewards system to first place in the preferred criteria. The 95 per cent nominating teaching is more than double the proportion who see it as currently rewarded. Research is second at 89 per cent suggesting that academics prefer that teaching and research be given close to equal status in promotion criteria. Administrative and leadership skills remain at third position in the preferred list with a greater level of support (70%) than currently given (59%). The ability to attract funds stands out as a potentially major cause of dissonance for academics. It is clearly considered to be less important (46%) than is currently perceived to be the case (82%). Also, many more academics would certainly prefer to see more importance attached to community service (55%) in contrast to current promotions policy.

## 2.6.1      Gender and career stage differences

There are some gender differences in perceptions of the reward systems (not shown in tables). More females than males perceive the ability to attract funds as a factor in promotions (88% cf 79%), and fewer females than males believe that teaching is rewarded (39% cf 47%). More males than females believe that contribution to committees is rewarded (54% cf 47%). Otherwise, females and males tend to agree on the extent to which research, length of service and community service are currently rewarded.

Career stage differences (not shown in tables) are not especially strong with respect to perception of the current reward systems. On most of the promotion matters, there is a similar response across the sample. However, it is no surprise that a much higher proportion of early career academics believe that length of service is

rewarded (40% cf 21% for mid-career and 8% for late career) and notably more early career academics believe that committee work is rewarded (58% cf 50% for mid-career and 49% for late career). On beliefs about what should be rewarded in promotion, there is little difference by career stage other than that mid-career academics are somewhat more likely to favour attracting funds and contributions to committee work.

### 2.6.2 Institutional and field of study differences

Academics in the mid-period universities appear to have somewhat different perceptions of the existing promotion criteria in their institutions than those in the old and new universities. It is particularly interesting to note that those in the mid-period universities are more likely to believe that teaching is rewarded (50% cf 43% old, 40% new). They are also somewhat more likely to see promotion favouring those who contribute to committees (57% cf 45% old, 53% new), and involved in community service (37% cf 21% old, 29% new). Beliefs about what ought to be rewarded differ in some important respects. More academics in the old universities believe that attracting funds should count (51% cf 45% mid, 43% new) while considerably fewer would like to see committee work rewarded (40% cf 45% mid, 49% new), and likewise, fewer in the old universities think community service should be rewarded (47% cf 56% mid, 62% new).

From the three broad combined fields of study some differences emerge. Lower proportions of the Business group see rewards in their fields going to those who have administrative skills, or who contribute to committees. They are also less likely to believe that teaching is rewarded in promotions. The contrasts are stronger when it comes to what should be recognised in promotion. Although the overall support is still high, fewer of the Engineering group believe that teaching should be recognised in promotions (88% cf 97% Humanities, 94% Business). On the other hand, they are more likely to value the ability to attract funds (50% cf 38% Humanities, 44% Business) and committee work, (53% cf 43% Humanities, 42% Business).

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## 2.7 Factors influencing satisfaction and stress

OLS Regression analysis was used to make an initial assessment of the contribution of various factors, circumstances, attitudes and demographic realities to reported levels of satisfaction and stressfulness. While it was not within the original brief to provide this level of analysis it was decided to provide an exploratory analysis with the view of developing this theme for future work. The details are provided in Appendix C.

Five aspects emerged as potential influences on satisfaction as measured by the item 'Generally speaking I am satisfied with my job': teaching problems; institutional support for teaching and research; commitment to research tasks; commitment to administration; and satisfaction with salary and benefits. The most important determinant of overall satisfaction is the degree of contentment with salary and other benefits (including job security and the opportunity to pursue academic interests). The second most important influence on satisfaction

concerned the extent to which the respondents saw themselves as hindered by other commitments, or by teaching problems (including 'too many students'). This issue is about half as important as salaries and other benefits. The greater the hindrances reported, the less the overall level of satisfaction. The remaining three attitudinal scales count for far less: drastic changes in any one would not necessarily have a large impact on overall satisfaction. Hindrances to support (including difficulties in obtaining research funding and inadequate research equipment) decreases satisfaction, as does low commitment to research activity (including presentation of research findings and thesis supervision).

The major demographic influence on overall satisfaction is career stage. Relative to mid-career academics, those in their early careers are much more satisfied, while those in their late careers are somewhat less satisfied. In other words there is a clear trend towards dissatisfaction for most academics as they move through the three career stages. Interestingly, the regression analysis did not show the type of institution or career interest of academics as a statistically significant influence on overall satisfaction. Likewise, gender and discipline does not appear to contribute to or detract from reported satisfaction levels. Hours of work do not have an effect on overall job satisfaction.

Level of stress was indicated by responses to the item 'My job is a source of considerable personal stress'. In contrast to satisfaction, hours of work have an effect on perceived work stress although it is not a major influence. While there is a linear relationship between hours worked and scores on the stress item it is not a strong link. The attitudinal factors that contribute most to stress are: the level of hindrances to teaching; low commitment to teaching and to student concerns; and dissatisfaction with salary and other benefits.

As with satisfaction, it appears that early career academics are less stressed relative to those in middle and late careers. Union members were more likely to be stressed, as were females, but these were not as influential as the academic discipline to which a respondent belonged. Two factors that did not appear to have an expected significant impact on stressfulness were career interests (teaching vs research) or institutional type.

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## 2.8 Selected trends and comparisons in work values and satisfaction

The figures presented in the following tables compare academics from the 1993 and 1999 CSHE national survey samples. They match to the extent that it includes those who both teach and research, and who are at the level of Lecturer B and above. Table 2.8 compares the samples on their career interests. Perhaps the most notable change is that over the last five years there has been a seven per cent increase in the proportion of academics who say they have a much stronger career interest in research than in teaching. At the same time, there has been a significant decline in the proportion with a stronger interest in teaching than research. The proportion primarily interested in administration has hardly changed.

**Table 2.8 Career interests 1993–1999**

(% agree on 5 point scale collapsing categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree')

	CSHE 1993 N=1 340	CSHE 1999 N=1 610
I have a much stronger career interest in research than teaching	35	41*
I have a much stronger career interest in teaching than research	29	24*
I have a much stronger career interest in administration than in teaching and research	7	6

\* significant at the .05 level

The trends in work values, satisfaction and outlooks shown in Table 2.9 reveal some seriously negative shifts in the perceptions of Australian academics.

There has been a dramatic decline in the level of overall satisfaction from 67 per cent to 51 per cent. This drop of 16 percentage points is also reflected in the significant rise of 10 per cent in the proportion of those who are negative about the prospects for young people. Although the proportion of those who subordinate their lives for their work has only marginally declined from 53 per cent to 51 per cent, the level of work-induced stress has risen significantly from 52 per cent to 56 per cent. The proportion of those who are looking for a change of job has remained stable and low at 17 per cent.

**Table 2.9 Changes in work values, satisfaction and outlooks 1993-1999**

(% agree on 5 point scale collapsing categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree')

	CSHE 1993 N=1 340	CSHE 1999 N=1 610
I subordinate most aspects of my life for my work	53	51
My job is a source of considerable stress	52	56*
I am actively seeking a change of job at the moment	18	17
This is not a good time for any young person to aspire to an academic career in my discipline	51	61*
If I had the choice again I would choose to be an academic	n/a	51
Generally speaking I am satisfied with my job	67	51*

\* significant at the .05 level

The results in Table 2.10 provide further evidence of some major shifts in the sources of work satisfaction for academics. The three items on which there are major and statistically significant declines in satisfaction are at the heart of the incentives and rewards systems for academics. In both surveys the academics were asked to identify the factors that most affected their level of satisfaction. In 1993, in rank order, the first by far was opportunity to pursue their own academic interests, followed by the security of their job, and then salary.

The decline of six per cent in satisfaction with academic salary is significant, but it should be remembered it was already low at 37 per cent. The drop of nine per cent in satisfaction with job security is also obviously important. However, perhaps the

most critical shift is the 13 per cent decline in satisfaction with the opportunity to pursue personal academic interests.

On the positive side, there is a significant rise of 11 per cent in the proportion who are satisfied with study leave policy and a lower but still significant rise of four per cent in those who are satisfied with conference attendance and travel policy. Given the overall negative context, a rise in satisfaction for any aspect of work conditions is perhaps noteworthy.

**Table 2.10 Trends in satisfaction with key work conditions\***

(% satisfied on 5 point scale collapsing categories 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied')

	CSHE 1993 N=1 340	CSHE 1999 N=1 610
Study leave policy	34	45
Conference attendance/ travel policy	36	40
Your academic salary	37	31
Security of your job	52	43
Opportunity to pursue your own academic interests	66	53

\* all differences significant at the .05 level

Table 2.11 shows percentage agreement responses to two items commonly used in surveys of the academic professions in Australia (1999), the UK (1993) and the USA (1993). Even allowing for the differences in timing, the level of reported stress in Australia is, and has been, substantially higher than in the UK or the USA.

Indeed, from the earlier trend results (Table 2.9) 52 per cent of Australian academics in 1993 agreed their job was a source of considerable stress. Equally striking is the very negative Australian response to the second item. Barely half the Australian academics would choose the same career again, whereas two thirds of UK academics and almost four out of five US academics are positive.

**Table 2.11 General indicators of work satisfaction Australia (1999), UK (1993), USA (1993)**

(% responses)

		agree	neutral	disagree
My job is a source of considerable personal stress	<i>Australia (1999)</i>	56	22	22
	<i>UK (1993)</i>	47	21	32
	<i>USA (1993)</i>	33	20	47
If I had the choice again, I would choose to become an academic	<i>Australia (1999)</i>	52	23	25
	<i>UK (1993)</i>	63	17	20
	<i>USA (1993)</i>	79	10	11

### 3. Work time: realities and preferences

Measuring the work time of academics is notoriously difficult given their exceptionally high level of professional autonomy and flexible work arrangements. The only schedules to which academics are absolutely tied are class contact hours and some administrative meetings. Beyond that they are notionally free to set their own

work hours. This means they have quite diverse patterns of activity over the week and year, and getting an accurate picture of their workload requires some reconstruction and estimation.

In keeping with previous surveys of academic workload, the respondents were asked to consider a typical week during the teaching period of Semester 2, 1998 that had immediately preceded the survey. Using the list of activities in Table 3.1 they were asked to estimate the number of hours they spent on each activity, and whether or not the hours on that activity had increased or decreased over the last five years. Despite the potential to distort figures, the survey questions used for some years appear to produce quite consistent patterns which suggest a reasonably high degree of reliability (McInnis 1992, 1996). The instrument does not ask the respondents to total their working hours—the totals are calculated by the researcher in the coding process. This goes some way to avoiding the possibility of respondents starting with a total in mind, and filling the gaps to match.

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#### 3.1 Allocations of time: real and preferred

The data in Table 3.1 shows mean hours for both the teaching and non-teaching periods and provides a picture of some important differences in workloads in the two time frames. Academics work longer hours in the teaching period, with the mainstream group averaging just over 49 hours a week, and less in the summer period where they average almost 45 hours per week. The overall pattern shows an allocation of time to the three main tasks in round figures of 50 per cent for teaching, 24 per cent for research, and 16 per cent for administration during the teaching period.

In terms of time alone, the single most demanding task for academics is teaching. Teaching and teaching related activities (including thesis supervision) combined make up 24.5 hours per week in the teaching period.

The average contact hours drop from 8.4 to 1.1 over the summer period, although the teaching related activity still requires eight hours per week. Nevertheless, eight hours per week on teaching activities (not including thesis supervision time) is still an important ongoing commitment of 18 per cent of the work load in the ‘non-teaching’ period. Added to this is of course thesis supervision that requires an average of around four hours per week throughout the year. Likewise,

administrative tasks are a constant demand all year, taking up 7.7 hours per week or 15.7 per cent of academics' time during the teaching period and dropping only slightly over the 'non-teaching' period. This includes a wide variety of tasks such as student enrolment and attendance at meetings.

The other major single activity for Australian academics is research and scholarship. This involves 11.8 hours per week on average, or 24 per cent of the total workload, during the teaching period—but increases markedly to 18.8 hours or 42 per cent of worktime over the 'non-teaching' period.

Consultancy work increases only slightly from 1.7 hours in the teaching period to 1.9 hours in the 'non-teaching' period, while community service stays the same at fewer than two hours per week. Together these activities make up about eight per cent of the workload. For this sample, the category 'other major activity' of fewer than two hours per week is also fairly constant throughout the year.

The load is reduced during the 'non-teaching' period by 4.6 hours but that still leaves a substantial 44.7 hour week in what was once regarded as a period of recovery. The reduction in teaching is not entirely matched by the increase of seven hours per week in research activity but this is obviously the main shift in focus of academics in the 'non-teaching' period.

**Table 3.1**      **Estimated average hours per week in 'teaching period' and average hours in 'non-teaching period' of mainstream cohort**

(N=1 554)

	Mean hours 'Teaching Period'	% of total activities	Mean hours 'Non- Teaching Period'	% of total activities
Teaching classes	8.4	17.1	1.1	2.4
Teaching related activity	12.1	24.7	8.0	17.9
Thesis supervision	4.0	8.0	4.1	9.2
Research/Scholarship	11.8	23.9	18.8	42.0
Administration	7.7	15.7	7.3	16.3
Consultancy	1.7	3.4	1.9	4.2
Community service	1.8	3.7	1.8	4.0
Other major activity	1.7	3.5	1.8	4.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3.2 below reveals the extent to which the sample is skewed towards long work hours during the teaching period. Sixty per cent of the mainstream group of academics work more than 45 hours a week. Further, 40 per cent work more than 50 hours per week. Forty-three per cent continue to work more than 45 hours per week during the 'summer break'.

**Table 3.2** Percentage of mainstream cohort respondents grouped by total hours.

(N=1 554)

Total hours in teaching period	%	Total hours in 'non-teaching' period	%
21–30	3	21–30	6
31–40	18	31–40	28
41–45	18	41–45	19
46–50	20	46–50	19
51–55	14	51–55	9
56–60	12	56–60	7
61–65	6	61–65	4
66–70	4	66–70	2
>70	4	>70	2

### 3.1.1 Work preferences

In contrast to these reported demands on their time, what would academics prefer to be doing? Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred level of activity in both time frames. It was assumed from previous surveys that this would provide further evidence of levels of commitment and interest and not simply result in a meaningless wish list. The pattern of responses (see Appendix, Table A8) suggests the item was not treated as trivial and instead provides useful insights into the ways academics think about their work.

On average, academics in Australia would prefer to reduce their overall work time from 49.3 to 43.8 hours per week. They would prefer to spend less time on teaching activities (5.6 hours per week fewer) and, not surprisingly, to reduce administration by a substantial 4.3 hours. They would prefer to increase the time on research from 11.8 to 16.3 hours per week (4.5 hours more).

### 3.1.2 Gender, career stage and level of appointment

There are three activities where there are statistically significant gender differences in work time (see Appendix A, Table A9). Females spend more hours per week than males on teaching related activities (13.6 cf 11.5) but less on thesis supervision (3.4 cf 4.2), and less on research/scholarship (10.7 cf 12.2). Otherwise, males and females spend about the same time on the remaining activities as well as the total hours during the teaching period.

There are no significant differences between the three career stage groups—early, mid or late—on the time devoted to teaching, or to research and scholarship (see Appendix A, Table A9). However, the later the career stage the more likely academics are to spend significantly more time on thesis supervision. Likewise, there is a predictably clear pattern of an increase in administration as careers develop. Late career academics also spend significantly more time on community service. In terms of total weekly hours, the late career academics work significantly



longer hours (51.9 hours) than those in mid-career (48.6 hours) and early career (47.6 hours).

Details of differences in work times during the teaching period by level of appointment are shown in Table A10 in relation to the Trends sub-sample. The higher the level of appointment, the longer the working week. Professors report working considerably longer hours (53.4 hours), than associate professors (50.8 hours), senior lecturers (49.5 hours), and lecturers (47.8 hours). The clear pattern of variations in time spent on specific tasks is that the higher the level of appointment the less time is spent on teaching, more on administration and research. The contrast between professors and level B lecturers is the most obvious: professors spend twice as much time on administration (12.5 hours cf 6.1 hours), almost nine hours fewer on teaching related activity (18.9 hours cf 27.6 hours), and three and a half hours more on research (13.5 hours cf 10.0 hours).

### **3.1.3 Institutional type**

There are marked differences between the three institutional types in almost every aspect of work time during the teaching period, except that there is no statistically significant difference between the staff across the universities in terms of the total hours per week (see Appendix A, Table A11). Otherwise, the aspect on which there is strong common ground is the time spent on administration. The staff in new universities spend significantly more hours on teaching and teaching related activities (22.8 hours) than those in mid-period universities (21 hours), and those in the old universities (17.1 hours).

This pattern reverses when it comes to research and scholarship, with the academics in the old universities spending significantly more time (14.2 hours) on these activities than those from the mid-period (11.7 hours) and new institutions (9.9 hours). Academics in the old and the mid-period institutions also spend significantly more time than those in the new institutions on thesis supervision.

### **3.1.4 Field of study differences**

The data in Table A12 (Appendix A) provide an indication of some notable variations in time spent on work activities by the three broad groupings of academics from disciplines working in often quite different contexts. Academics in the Humanities group spend more time on teaching related activities (13.7 hours) than those in the Engineering group (11.5 hours). However, those in the Engineering group spend significantly more time on thesis supervision (4.7 hours) than either the Humanities (3.8 hours) or Business groups (2.8 hours).

Interestingly, those in the Business group spend 6.5 hours per week on administration, which is significantly less than those in Humanities (8.2 hours). However, when it comes to community service, the Humanities academics nominated 2.1 hours per week on these activities—significantly more than the 1.4 hours from the Business group.

In total hours, academics in the Humanities and the Engineering groups work about the same time, but the Humanities academics work significantly longer hours than their colleagues in Business (50.9 hours cf 46.4 hours).

### 3.2 Factors influencing change in the patterns of work

The respondents were asked if there had been substantial changes in their overall work hours in teaching periods over the last five years. More than half (55%) said their hours had substantially increased, 35 per cent said there was no change, and a mere five per cent thought their hours had decreased.

**Table 3.3 Perception of substantial change in work hours in teaching**

(% responses for mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Substantial increase	No change	Substantial decrease	n/a
Teaching classes	36	44	15	6
Teaching related activities	45	36	13	5
Thesis supervision	40	40	8	13
Research/scholarship	28	26	42	5
Administration	62	26	7	5
Consultancy	20	44	15	21
Public/community service	20	54	12	14
Other major activities	34	27	6	32

A closer look at these perceptions of change (Table 3.3) suggests that although 36 per cent reported a substantial increase in class contact, a larger proportion (45%) have seen their teaching related activities increase. This is almost matched, however, by the 42 per cent who believe their time on research and scholarship has substantially declined since 1994. It is interesting to note the 28 per cent who say their time on these activities has increased. However, the perceived change that stands out by far is the 62 per cent who believe their time on administration has substantially increased.

The academics were also asked to indicate—from a list provided—which activities have had the most impact on changes in their working hours in the last five years. The responses shown in Table 3.4 have been ordered from the highest to the lowest proportion who indicated increased hours.

**Table 3.4 Activities with most impact on changing work hours**

(% responses in descending order of increased hours for mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Increased hours	Decreased hours	No change	n/a
Committee work	78	4	14	4
Liaising with administrators	71	3	20	6
Providing academic support for students	69	4	23	4
Seeking funds to support academic work	67	2	16	15
Developing course materials for new technologies	66	1	11	22

(continued)

**Table 3.4**      **Activities with most impact on changing work hours**  
(continued)

(% responses in descending order of increased hours for mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Increased hours	Decreased hours	No change	n/a
Doing your own word processing	62	5	28	5
Providing pastoral support for students	52	6	31	11
Marketing and promotional activities	50	3	16	31
Keeping up to date in your field	50	25	23	2
Supervising casual and junior staff	49	4	23	24
Designing and scanning in online materials	43	3	16	39
Industry liaison	40	4	20	36
Your own professional development	39	26	27	8
International exchange programs	28	2	19	50
Off-shore academic work	25	2	16	56

The responses to this item again emphasise the perceived impact of administrative work on the working lives of academics. More hours on committee work clearly heads the list (78%). Obviously few are unaffected. Doing your own word processing could also be said to contribute to the perception of an increased administrative load. It pervades so many aspects of work that it can perhaps be included with teaching and research activities. In any event, this has had a strong perceived impact on the changing work times of 62 per cent of academics. Perhaps also contributing to the perception that administrative work has increased, are the tasks associated with supervising casual and junior staff, considered by almost half (49%) to be an important factor.

Providing academic support for students figures prominently on the list, with a substantial proportion (69%) believing this aspect of their work is changing their work hours. This needs to be considered in the context of the high proportions of academics who are negative about the calibre of the students discussed in the chapter that follows. Other aspects related to changing work hours associated with students include the provision of pastoral support (52%), and, considerably less widespread, working on international exchange programs (28%).

Two-thirds of the mainstream academics report that developing course materials for new technologies has had a major impact on their changing work hours. Indeed, the low responses (11%) to 'no change' suggests that where applicable, the time demands of developing course materials for new technologies is particularly influential. While designing and scanning in on-line materials is not an issue for 39 per cent of the respondents, it has had a marked impact on 43 per cent of academics.

Seeking funds to support academic work is a major influence on work patterns for 67 per cent of academics and, indeed, only 15 per cent considered this was not applicable in their case. Although 31 per cent were not affected by involvement in marketing and promotional activities, 50 per cent did rate this as having a major impact on their work time. Likewise, industry liaison also does not affect a

substantial proportion of the sample but 40 per cent regard it as an influential factor.

Finally, the time spent on 'keeping up to date in your field' and on 'your own professional development' suggests some fundamental divides within the sample in their experience of changing work hours. These are the only two aspects of work which have a substantial proportion reporting fewer hours. For half the sample, the effort of keeping up to date is consuming more time, for 25 per cent it means less time, and presumably that has negative connotations. Although relatively fewer (39%) say their professional development is demanding more time, 26 per cent report spending less hours on this, and for 27 per cent there has been no change. One interpretation here is that for around one quarter of academics, other demands are squeezing out time for the core academic activities of scholarship and skills development.

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### 3.3 Changes to core work activities 1977–1999

The trends in broad work patterns in the teaching period since the 1970's, are shown in Table 3.5. The most important observation, particularly with respect to the last five years, is that the overall work hours have increased by 1.5 hours to 49.2 hours. While this may not seem to be a major shift—and the precision of the data should not be exaggerated—it is important to remember that the increase in work hours from 1977 to 1993 had already pushed average academic work times to a quite high base, even relative to comparable professions at that time.

The second point to note is that the proportion of time given to the major activities of teaching and research overall has been broadly stable. However, there has been a significant drop of 1.3 hours spent on teaching and teaching related activities as well as a reduction in the proportion of time on these aspects from 53 per cent to just on 49 per cent of the total workload. This has not been directly matched by a significant change in time given to research, which has increased only marginally to just under 23 per cent of work time.

Table 3.5 Estimated average hours per week and proportion of time spent on major activities by full-time academic staff (lecturer and above) in teaching semesters 1977, 1993, 1999

	1977 (B.Williams)		1993 (CSHE)	1999 (CSHE)
	CAE	UNI		
Teaching and teaching related activities	29.4 (65.9%)	23.3 (51.3%)	25.3 (53.0%)	24.0* (48.7%)
Research	3.8 (8.5%)	11.5 (25.3%)	10.1 (21.2%)	11.2 (22.8%)
Administration	8.0 (17.9%)	7.0 (15.4%)	6.4 (13.4%)	8.4* (17.1%)
Community Activity	2.0 (4.4%)	1.9 (4.2%)	1.8 (3.7%)	1.9 (3.9%)
Other Activity	1.4 (3.1%)	1.7 (3.7%)	4.1 (8.5%)	3.7 (7.5%)
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>44.6</b>	<b>45.4</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>49.2</b>

\* significant at the .05 level with respect to 1993 and 1999 surveys

The time given to community activity has remained quite constant at around two hours per week but the residual group of 'other activity' which was reported as a major shift from 1997 to 1993 (McInnis 1996) has dropped slightly in the last five years from 8.5 to 7.5 per cent—not a significant decline.

The area of most substantial change has been the increase of two hours a week in administration in just the last five years. This statistically significant jump from 13.4 per cent in 1993 to 17.1 per cent in 1999 is congruent with the strong perception of administration becoming an increasing and seriously intrusive burden.

## 4. Teaching matters

As we have seen in the previous chapter, most academics spend just under half their working week on activities concerned directly with teaching. There are, of course, major variations in the way the work of teaching is managed by individual academics, and in the priorities they give to the tasks. The survey was not able to explore in any detail these often complex patterns of behaviour that comprise the activity of teaching. For some academics, teaching means an international field trip with a large group of students supported by an intensive pre- and post- trip lecture program. In other instances, teaching means long days working closely with groups of students developing clinical skills. And, of course, there are those who work most effectively, and appropriately, with a mix of large group lectures and blocks of seminars. While the data presented in this chapter cannot pretend to reflect the everyday diversity of the ‘small worlds—different worlds’ in which academics teach (Clark 1987) it does show some major variations in teaching roles.

The responses to the items on teaching first need to be understood in relation to the student population taught by the academics. Ninety-three per cent of the mainstream cohort discussed in this chapter are currently teaching undergraduate students, 58 per cent teach in postgraduate coursework programs and 75 per cent are engaged in thesis supervision.

Respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of students in their classes with specified characteristics. These estimates are obviously open to question, but they seem to approximate the national patterns of enrolment and they give a sense of the classroom context in which the respondents work. For 65 per cent of the academics the majority of the undergraduate students they teach (80–100%) are enrolled full-time. However, only 54 per cent have a clear majority of students in their classes who came directly to university from school (80–100%). Seventy-six per cent of the respondents have fewer than 20 per cent international fee-paying students in their classes, and for 70 per cent of academics a clear majority of the students have English as their first language (80–100%).

The responses are more mixed in relation to postgraduate students. For 34 per cent of the academics, a majority of their postgraduate students are full-time (80–100%), but at the other end of the continuum, 21 per cent have only a very small proportion (fewer than 20%) of full-time students. Fifty-one per cent have fewer than 20 per cent international fee-paying students while only eight per cent have a clear majority of students in this category. A clear majority of the respondents (59%) primarily teach postgraduate students who have English as their first language (80–100%), but the mean is substantially lower than for undergraduate students.

## 4.1 Changing approaches to teaching: methods and assessment

The respondents were asked if, over the past five years, they had changed their teaching methods with respect to the list shown in Table 4.1.

A clear majority of academics who are teaching say they are using problem-based learning (74%), computer-assisted course delivery (72%), multimedia technology (70%), and collaborative learning strategies (65%). A substantial minority are using distance-based learning approaches (46%). On the face of it, the level of usage appears higher than expected. The nature and extent of usage is not entirely clear partly because there may be some definitional problems. Following the UK version of the questionnaire, the respondents were not given precise meanings for the teaching methods in the instructions. It may be therefore that the term 'multimedia' for some respondents includes any electronic presentations such as PowerPoint or overhead projection. Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that 'problem-based learning' has been interpreted in a generic sense rather than as a specific pedagogical approach to the organisation of student learning.

**Table 4.1** Change in teaching methods

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Start	More	Less	n/ a
Distance-based learning approaches	19	25	2	55
Computer-assisted course delivery	30	40	2	28
Multimedia technology	26	42	2	30
Collaborative learning strategies	18	43	4	35
Problem-based learning	18	51	5	27

For the most part, gender differences in the adoption of new teaching strategies are only slight (see Appendix A, Table A13), although a higher proportion of females than males report using collaborative learning strategies (71% cf 62%). At the institutional level the academics in the new universities generally have a somewhat higher rate of use of the teaching methods listed (see Appendix A, Table A14). They are certainly far more involved in distance education and have a higher use of computer-assisted delivery (78% cf old 68% and mid-period 67%) and collaborative learning strategies (75% cf old 57% and mid-period 60%).

Respondents were asked what prompted them to make changes in their teaching methods. They were able to indicate more than one reason as shown in Table 4.2 in rank order. Aside from the majority responding they were motivated by their own initiative, the next most common reason has to do with the availability of technology (72%). The pressure of institutional policy (46%) and student expectations (42%) are strong influences. To a lesser extent, the adoption of new teaching methods has been prompted by the increase in student number (39%) and resource constraints (31%).

**Table 4.2** Factors influencing change in teaching methods mainstream cohort

(N=1 554)

Reasons for changes in teaching methods	(%)
Your own initiative/decision	78
Availability of technology	72
University/Department policy	46
Student demand/feedback	42
Increased student numbers	39
Resource constraints/lack of funding	31
Pressure from colleagues	14
Availability of extra resources/funding	10
Shortage of space	7
Other	8

## 4.2 Methods of assessment

Attitudes towards assessment practices can be considered something of a litmus test of change in approaches to teaching.

The respondents were asked to indicate on a list of seven aspects shown in Table 4.3 the aspects of student performance they currently assess and those they think should be. The aspects are ranked in the table from highest to lowest proportions of what is currently assessed. The clusters of responses are quite clear. Depth of knowledge is the highest by far; the next three aspects—ability to think critically, written communication skills and problem solving skills—have similarly high responses. More than half the academics say they assess verbal communication skills, and a relatively small minority currently assess the ability to memorise (38%) or use diagnostic assessment (31%).

The contrasts between what is, and what should be assessed, are telling. Although it remains high at 84 per cent, there is notably less support amongst the respondents for depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject in the assessment process. At the other end of the continuum, the ability of students to memorise drops from a low of 38 per cent who believe it is assessed to only 18 per cent who think it should be.

The majority of academics believe that the ability to think critically and to reason should be assessed, but of course, that effectively matches what they suggest is their current practice. Likewise, there is minimal variation in the priority given to problem solving and written communication skills.

A particularly interesting result here is the 18 per cent difference in the proportion of respondents who believe that verbal communication skills should be assessed. Finally, and of major importance, more than double the number of respondents (63%) believe that assessment should involve the diagnoses of students' strengths and weakness as against 31 per cent who believe it is.



**Table 4.3** What is and what should be assessed

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Currently is	Should be
Depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject	94	84
Ability to think critically and to reason	84	87
Written communication skills	81	79
Problem solving skills	78	81
Verbal communication skills	55	73
Ability to memorise	38	18
Diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses	31	63

### 4.2.1 Career stage differences in assessment priorities

There are few noteworthy differences by career stage as to what is currently assessed. However, there are some interesting differences concerning what ought to be assessed. More late career academics tend to believe that depth of knowledge and subject understanding should be assessed (87% see Appendix A, Table A15). They are also relatively more strongly in favour of assessing: the ability to think critically (90%); written communication skills (84%); problem solving skills (86%); and the ability to memorise (26%).

### 4.2.2 Field of study differences

Comparing just the Humanities and Engineering groups, reveals some key differences in pedagogical assumptions and approaches that need to be considered in any analysis of directions in assessment (Table 4.4). Although there is some agreement on what is assessed, the Humanities group give considerably more emphasis to assessing critical thinking, written communication, verbal communication and diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses. They give far less attention to problem-solving skills and the ability to memorise.

Again, the contrasts between what is, and what ought to be assessed, is noteworthy. If they had their preference, the Humanities group would actually give less attention to written communication skills, less to the ability to memorise, and more to problem solving skills. Twenty-five per cent more of the Humanities group believe that diagnostic assessment should be used more than is currently the case.

For the Engineering group the pattern of differences between what is, and what should be assessed, is somewhat different. Twelve per cent fewer believe that subject knowledge should be assessed as against what currently is assessed. There is also a notably lower proportion who believe that written communication should be assessed than is currently the case and similarly, although the proportion who say that problem-solving skills should be assessed is high (82%), somewhat surprisingly it is seven per cent lower than those who believe it is currently assessed. Major differences between what is and what should be assessed concerns the ability to memorise and the use of diagnostic assessment. Twenty per cent fewer of the

Engineering group support the assessment of memory, and a very large 39 per cent more are in favour of the use of diagnostic assessment.

**Table 4.4 What is and what should be assessed: field of study differences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Humanities Social Sciences N=381		Engineering Architecture Agriculture N=162		Business Admin N=180	
	is	shd	is	shd	is	shd
Depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject	96	84	93	81	92	86
Ability to think critically and to reason	91	86	83	84	83*	89
Written communication skills	91	83	77	73	79*	80
Problem solving skills	66	74	89	82	87*	83*
Verbal communication skills	68	73	60	70	50*	70
Ability to memorise	29	19	36	16	43*	14
Diagnosis of student's strengths and weaknesses	42	67	22	61	16*	50*

\* significant at .05 level (ChiSquare test of independence)

It is noteworthy that while there are significant differences between Business and the other two groups on most perceptions of what is currently assessed, there are only two aspects on which there is a significant difference with respect to what should be assessed: problem-solving skills, and the diagnosis of student's strengths and weaknesses. Business academics are more likely to emphasise problem-solving skills than those in Humanities, but less likely to be concerned with diagnosing strengths and weaknesses.

### 4.3 Training for teaching and thesis supervision

The academics were asked if at the start of their career, or in the last two years, they had received training in teaching methods (Table 4.5). Just over one-third (34%) had received some training at the start of their career. A quarter had some professional development in teaching methods in the two years prior to the survey. A more negative pattern was evident with respect to training for thesis supervision. Only 12 per cent had any training to prepare them for the task of supervising research degree students and 16 per cent had received training on this subject in the two years prior to the survey.

**Table 4.5 Training in teaching methods and supervision**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Start of career ?		Last 2 years ?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Teaching methods	34	66	24	76
Thesis supervision	12	88	16	84

Table 4.6 shows patterns of training for teaching across a number of variables.

The gender differences are partly a product of their higher proportions in the early career group with more females having training at the start of their careers.

New academics are now more likely to get some form of training through induction programs at the start of their careers, although the majority (56%) still do not. It may be that the high proportion of early career academics who have had training in the last two years are referring to their induction training. This somewhat inflates the overall figure of 44 per cent indicating they had received some form of training in teaching.

**Table 4.6 Training in teaching methods**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Start of career	Last two years
Males (N=1087)	31	24
Females (N=465)	39	26
Early Career (N=384)	44	36
Mid Career (N=735)	31	23
Late Career (N=435)	30	17
Old Institution (N=462)	32	24
Mid-period Institution (N=450)	32	30
New Institution (N=604)	37	21
Humanities/Social Science (N=381)	34	22
Engineering/Architecture/Agriculture (N=162)	36	33
Business/Administration (N=180)	33	27

A notably higher proportion of academics in the new universities had some training at the start of their careers (37%) but it appears that more in the old and mid-period universities had training in the last two years. Again, this may reflect the larger numbers of early career academics in the new institutions. The field of study differences at the start of career are not large but a notably lower proportion of academics from Humanities (22%) have been involved in training in the last two years than the other two fields.

Table 4.7 shows responses on the extent of training for thesis supervision. There is little difference by gender in the proportion of academics who have received training in thesis supervision at some point in their careers. Again, the late career academics are conspicuous for their lack of initial formal training, or in the last two years. The relatively high proportion of academics in the new universities (24%)

who had received training in thesis supervision in the last two years is noteworthy—so too is the contrast between the Engineering and Business groups (12% cf 22%).

**Table 4.7 Training in thesis supervision**

(% agree mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Start of career	Last two years
Males (N=1087)	11	16
Females (N=465)	13	19
Early Career (N=384)	15	16
Mid Career (N=735)	12	18
Late Career (N=435)	8	14
Old Institution (N=462)	12	9
Mid-period Institution (N=450)	9	15
New Institution (N=604)	13	24
Humanities/Social Science (N=381)	10	17
Engineering/Architecture/Agriculture(N=1 62)	11	12
Business/Administration (N=180)	13	22

### 4.3.1 The quality of training

It is one thing to complete a course of training, but the outcome may not be entirely satisfactory for the participants. Table 4.8 shows that of those who completed a course in teacher training at the start of their career most found it helpful, although for the majority (53%) it was only ‘fairly helpful’. The more recent reports on the last two years should be considered a more accurate evaluation. The pattern is slightly less positive with only one in four rating the training as ‘very helpful’ and slightly more (13%) being negative.

The pattern for training in thesis supervision is not all that different—although notably less positive. The low proportion of only 16 per cent rating the training in the last two years as ‘very helpful’ is noteworthy.

**Table 4.8 Degree of helpfulness among those who reported receiving training**

(% responses mainstream cohort)

	Start of Career			Last Two Years		
	Very Helpful	Fairly Helpful	Not Helpful	Very Helpful	Fairly Helpful	Not Helpful
Teaching methods (N= 510)	37	53	9	25	61	13
Thesis supervision (N= 178)	26	61	13	16	65	20

## 4.4 Factors hindering teaching

The data in Table 4.9 show the responses to the question ‘to what extent, if at all, is your teaching hindered by the following?’ This has been a useful item for the analysis of the impact of change on the everyday work of academics.

**Table 4.9 Factors hindering teaching**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Not hindered			Greatly hindered	
Having to teach subjects outside your area of expertise	49	15	16	15	5
Current research commitments	38	16	20	19	7
Lack of up-to-date equipment/technology	32	19	20	19	11
Too many students	24	12	18	24	22
Too wide a range of students’ abilities	17	12	21	28	22

The major hindrances to teaching concern the students. Fifty per cent of the academics cite the wide range of students’ abilities as a problem, and 46 per cent believe that having too many students is a hindrance to their teaching. However, at the other end of the scale, 36 per cent of the academics are not hindered by the number of students, and 29 per cent are not having difficulties with the range of student abilities.

The lack of up-to-date teaching equipment and technology is not an issue for 51 per cent of the respondents but it is regarded as a hindrance by 30 per cent of the respondents. Similarly, 54 per cent of the respondents do not find their research commitments present a problem for their teaching but just over one-quarter do.

Perhaps one of the most important responses to consider closely concerns the demands on the mainstream group to teach in unfamiliar territory. One in five academics say they are hindered in their teaching because they are teaching subjects outside their expertise.

### 4.4.1 Gender, career stage and level of appointment differences

The only gender difference of significance on factors that hinder teaching (see Appendix A, Table A16) is that females are more likely than males to cite teaching outside their area of expertise as an obstacle (23% cf 19%). There are, however, distinct career stage patterns in the perceptions of obstacles to effective teaching. Late career academics are less likely to be hindered by teaching outside their area of expertise and considerably less likely to be hampered by their current research commitments (see Appendix A, Table A17). The group who appear least hindered in their teaching by the factors listed are professors. Relative to the other levels of appointment, professors are much less likely to teach outside their area of expertise, or to be affected by lack of equipment, too many students, and too wide a range of students’ abilities (see Appendix A, Table A18).

### 4.4.2 Institutional and field of study differences

Some strong variations in obstacles to teaching between the three institutional types are shown in Table A19 (see Appendix A). Academics in the new universities are significantly more likely to agree that their teaching is hindered by teaching outside their area of expertise (25% cf mid-period 20% cf old 14%) and their teaching is also perceived to be under greater pressure from their research commitments (29% cf mid-period 26% cf old 22%).

While it is true that the proportion overall who agree that too many students and too wide a range of abilities is a hindrance to teaching, academics from the new universities are significantly more likely to be hampered by these factors. Fifty-three per cent of those in the new universities believe the overload in students interferes with their teaching as against 40 per cent in the old, and 43 per cent in the mid-period universities. There is little difference between the three groups with respect to the lack of up-to-date teaching equipment and technologies.

The field of study differences in factors hindering teaching are quite marked (Table 4.10). Those in the Business/Administration fields are significantly less likely to find that teaching outside their area of expertise is a problem for their teaching. On the other hand, a much higher proportion of the Business groups (35%) find their research commitments a hindrance than the Humanities (27%) and the Engineering group (23%). The Engineering group are significantly more frustrated in their teaching by their lack of up-to-date equipment (38% cf Humanities 30% cf Business 22%). The other notable feature of the data shows that the Humanities group are the most likely to find their teaching hindered by having to teach subjects outside their expertise.

**Table 4.10 Factors hindering teaching: field of study differences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Humanities Social Sciences N=381	Engineering Architecture Agriculture N=166	Business Admin N=180
Having to teach subjects outside your area of expertise	22	19	15*
Current research commitments	27	23	35
Lack of up-to-date equipment	30	38	22*
Too many students	51	50	46
Too wide a range of students' abilities	50	60	51

\* significant at .05 level (MannWhitney)

## 4.5 Perceptions of the calibre of the students

Related to the issues that hinder teaching is the perception that students are increasingly less equipped for higher education. The respondents were asked to rate the calibre of the students they were currently teaching, compared with those they were teaching five years ago. The data in Table 4.11 show that almost one-third

believe their undergraduates are worse now, and only a small minority (11%) think they are better. Considerably fewer (17%) think the calibre of postgraduates has declined.

**Table 4.11 Perceived change in calibre of students over five years**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Better	About the same	Worse	N/A
Undergraduates	11	45	32	12
Postgraduate	12	50	17	20

### 4.5.1 Gender

There is a statistically significant gender difference in perceptions of the changing calibre of undergraduate students. Males are more likely to be negative about the calibre of students than females (34% cf 25%). They also appear to be somewhat more negative about their postgraduate students than females (11% cf 16%). (See Appendix A, Table A20).

### 4.5.2 Institutional and field of study differences

The differences by institutional type suggests little difference between the university types in the proportions who believe the calibre of the current students is better (see Appendix A Table A21).

However, some field of study differences in perceptions of the changing calibre of students are clearly shown in Table 4.12. Overall, those in the Humanities group are significantly more positive about their undergraduate students than those in the Engineering or Business fields. The gaps between the field of study groups on the negative side (Humanities 27% cf Engineering 36% cf Business 45%) are also quite distinct.

**Table 4.12 Calibre of students: field of study differences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Better			About same			Worse		
	Hu	En	Bu	Hu	En	Bu	Hu	En	Bu
Undergraduate	12	8	6	51	43	40	27	36	45
Postgraduate	19	10	9	48	53	36	16	12	32

(NB: Percentages do not add to 100 because the 'not applicable' responses are not shown.)

There are also marked differences in ratings of the relative quality of postgraduate students across the fields of study with 19 per cent of the Humanities group significantly more positive compared with only 10 per cent of the Engineering group and nine per cent of the Business group. While a higher proportion of the Humanities group (16%) are more negative about the postgraduates than the

Engineering group (12%) the most striking and statistically significant difference is between the Engineering group and the Business group. Almost a third (32%) of the Business group believe their postgraduate students are worse than five years ago.

## 4.6 Selected trends

### 4.6.1 Factors hindering teaching 1993–1999

The data in Table 4.13 show a significant increase over the last five years in the proportion of academics who say their teaching is hindered or greatly hindered with respect to every one of the five aspects listed. The biggest increases having a negative impact on teaching are the demands of current research activity (15%) and too wide a range of student abilities (13%).

The proportion citing too many students as a problem increased by 10 per cent, lack of equipment by eight per cent and teaching subjects outside one's expertise by four per cent. It is worth noting the sharp increase in those who now say they are greatly hindered by having too many students (an increase of seven per cent), or too wide a range of students' abilities (an increase of 11 per cent).

**Table 4.13 Factors hindering teaching 1993–1999**

(% responses 1993 N=1 340; mainstream cohort 1999 N= 1 554;)\*

		Not hindered			Greatly hindered	
Having to teach subjects outside your area of expertise	1993	48	20	16	12	4
	1999	49	15	16	15	5
Current research commitments	1993	41	31	18	9	2
	1999	38	16	20	19	7
Lack of up-to-date equipment/technology	1993	37	23	19	15	7
	1999	32	19	20	19	11
Too many students	1993	29	19	17	21	15
	1999	24	12	18	24	22
Too wide a range of students' abilities	1993	22	21	21	26	11
	1999	17	12	21	28	22

\* all statistically significant differences

### 4.6.2 Calibre of students: Australia 1999 and the UK 1996

Notwithstanding differences in sampling profiles and the timing of the two surveys, it appears that Australian academics share with their colleagues in the UK a fairly negative view of the current generation of undergraduate students (Table 4.14). A very small proportion in both systems believe the calibre of their students is on the improve. However, a much higher proportion of UK academics believe their students are worse than they were five years prior to the 1996 survey (47% cf 32%).



On the other hand, a much higher proportion of UK academics believe that the quality of their postgraduate students has remained about the same over the five years.

**Table 4.14 Calibre of students: Australia 1999 and UK 1996**

Aust. mainstream cohort N=1 554. UK N=809 (% responses)

	Better		About the same		Worse		N/A; don't know	
	Aust	UK	Aust	UK	Aust	UK	Aust	UK
Undergraduates	11	12	45	37	32	47	12	5
Postgraduate	12	11	50	66	17	19	20	8

### 4.6.3 Changes in teaching methods

Some comparisons with the UK data from the Dearing Enquiry on the nature and reasons for change in teaching methods are informative.

**Table 4.15 Main reason for changes in teaching methods Australia 1999 and UK 1996**

Aust. mainstream cohort N=1 554. UK N=809 (% responses)

	Australia Rank	UK Rank
Your own initiative/decision	1	3
Availability of technology	2	1
University/Department policy	3	4
Student demand/feedback	4	5
Increased student numbers	5	2
Resource constraints/lack of funding	6	7
Pressure from colleagues	7	6

Although the two data sets are not directly comparable, there are some discernible elements in common. As shown in the discussion earlier in this chapter, 'Your own initiative' and 'the availability of technology' are rated first and second by Australian academics as reasons for changing their teaching methods. The UK academics have also been influenced to change their teaching by the availability of new technologies (30%), and similarly, they attribute the changes largely to their own initiative (23%). However, 'increased student numbers' rank second as a motivator in the UK, and fifth in Australia.

## 5. Research activities and priorities

The mainstream group in this survey were defined by their involvement in both teaching and research. Research heads the list of activities to which this group of academics are most strongly committed (87%). A mere four per cent say they are not at all committed to research. Sixty-seven per cent are committed to presenting their research at conferences, and 81 per cent are committed to the publication of their research findings—indeed 51 per cent are strongly committed to publication.

As noted in earlier chapters, academics would prefer to spend more time on research if they could, and, while most have an interest in both teaching and research, 42 per cent say they have a much stronger career interest in research than in teaching. This is twice the proportion who say they are interested primarily in teaching rather than research (21%). A clear majority (89%) believe research should be rewarded in promotions policy. With weighted averages for the teaching and 'non-teaching' periods, research takes up 31 per cent of the annual academic work time. The jump from research taking 24 per cent of the total workload during the teaching period to 42 per cent of work time over the non-teaching period perhaps understates the year round preoccupation with research for many academics. For most it is always on the agenda.

Academics receive research funds from a range of sources. For most of the mainstream sample in this study, financial support over the last five years has come from their university (63%) or faculty/department (55%). The next most common sources were the Australian Research Council (38%), other government (32%), and private industry (32%). Nine per cent had received funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council. Nine per cent said their research does not require funding.

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### 5.1 Research motives

The motives for research are mixed, but by far the majority of academics (91%) believe that research is the primary source of reward in promotions policy. However, as the data in Table 5.1 show, the intrinsic rewards for research—enjoyment and interest—are nominated by 91 per cent of the academics as the major reason for doing research and/or consultancy. There is a major gap of 32 per cent between the intrinsic reasons of enjoyment and interest (91%) and getting publications (59%), or more instrumentally, increasing chances of security, tenure or promotion (52%).

Although 49 per cent say a major reason for conducting their research is to make an impact on their teaching, almost as many (44%) rate it as only a minor reason.

There is relatively low interest in increasing the income or profile of the department (34%) although this tops the list of ‘minor reasons’ at 58 per cent.

**Table 5.1 Reasons for doing research/consultancy**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N=1 554)

	Major reason	Minor reason	n/a
Because you enjoy it, it motivates you and it interests you	91	9	-
To get publications	59	39	2
To increase your department’s income or profile	34	58	8
To increase your chance of security, tenure or promotion	52	39	9
To give inputs and stimulus to your teaching	49	44	7

### 5.1.1 Gender, career stage, and level of appointment

While there is a significant but only slight difference between males and females in terms of the dominance of intrinsic motives for doing research, there are some notable gender differences shown in Table 5.2. Females are significantly more likely than males to say they are doing research to get publications (68% cf 58%), and also more likely to use their teaching to inform and stimulate their teaching (60% cf 49%).

**Table 5.2 Reasons for doing research/consultancy: gender differences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Male N=1 087	Female N=465
Because you enjoy it, it motivates you and it interests you	92	89*
To get publications	58	68*
To increase your department’s income or profile	36	39
To increase your chance of security, tenure or promotion	56	61
To give inputs and stimulus to your teaching	49	60*

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-square test of independence)

The pattern of responses by career stage (Appendix A, Table A22) is basically the same as for gender. This is not surprising given the gender distribution across the three career stages. There are no differences in the levels of intrinsic motivation from early to mid and late career. Rather predictably, the early and mid career academics are significantly more likely than those in the late career stage to be motivated by the need to get publications and to increase their chances of

security. The late career academics are significantly more likely to do research to give inputs to their teaching.

There is, however, a significant difference between academics at different levels of appointment. Those at professorial and associate professor rank are more likely than senior lecturers and lecturers to be motivated by the intrinsic rewards of research (Appendix A, Table A23). Professors are far more likely to say they do research to increase their department's income or profile but (by definition) they are the least likely to be motivated by security or promotion. Professors are also significantly less likely to do research to enhance their teaching.

### 5.1.2 Institutional type

Overall, the patterns of responses across the three institutional types is fairly similar. The data in Table 5.3 show that marginally more academics in the new universities are motivated to research by the need to get publications and to improve their career positions. There differences between all three university types on enjoyment, interest and motivation, with those in the older universities most likely to give this as a reason for doing research. The reverse is the case with respect to the last item. Here, the academics in the old universities are significantly less likely than either the mid or new group to say they use their research to inform their teaching. The difference between the mid and new universities is not significant.

**Table 5.3 Reasons for doing research/consultancy: institutional differences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Old N=462	Mid N=450	New N=604
Because you enjoy it, it motivates you and it interests you	95	92	88*
To get publications	58	58	63
To increase your department's income or profile	37	35	37
To increase your chance of security, tenure or promotion	53	55	60
To give inputs and stimulus to your teaching	45	57	55*

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-square test of independence)

### 5.1.3 Field of study differences

The variations in research motives by field of study shown in Table 5.4 are statistically significant in all but one respect: they are uniformly unmotivated by the need to increase department income and profile. Academics in the Humanities group are significantly more likely than those in the Engineering or Business groups to be motivated by an intrinsic interests in research, as well as being far more likely to do research so that it contributes to their teaching. The

Business group are significantly more instrumental than the other two groups in terms of getting publications and improving their career prospects.

**Table 5.4 Reasons for doing research/consultancy: field of study differences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Humanities Social Sciences N=381	Engineering Architecture Agriculture N=162	Business Admin. N=180
Because you enjoy it, it motivates you and it interests you	94	89	84*
To get publications	62	54	73*
To increase your department's income or profile	37	38	36
To increase your chance of security, tenure or promotion	58	59	73*
To give inputs and stimulus to your teaching	62	44	45*

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-square test of independence)

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## 5.2 Types of research

From a list of four types of research the respondents were asked to nominate any they had been engaged in over the last five years. For most academics research is both theoretical and applied. In this sample, most academics are working on research that advances theory (65%) and research that they regard as applied professional, business or industry-related research (58%). Just over one-third (35%) are involved in research that informs their teaching, and 29 per cent are working on research that is policy oriented or assisted public or voluntary bodies.

**Table 5.5 Types of research**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

Type of Research	%
Advancing theory	65
Applied professional, business or industry related	58
Directed to inform teaching	35
Policy oriented	29

### 5.2.1 Gender, career stage, and level of appointment

There are significant gender differences on each of the four items related to research motives. The data in Table 5.6 show that males are more likely than females to be engaged in research that involves the advancement of theory (67% cf 60%). Males are also more likely than females to conduct applied research (60% cf 54%). Females are significantly more likely to describe their research as directed to inform their teaching (42% cf 32%) and they are also more active in policy oriented research (34% cf 27%).

**Table 5.6** Types of research: gender differences

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Male N= 1 087	Female N=465
Advancing theory	67	60*
Applied professional, business or industry related	60	54*
Directed to inform teaching	32	42*
Policy oriented	27	34*

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-square test of independence)

Career stage differences in types of research are relatively slight (Appendix A, Table A24). Early career academics are least likely to be working in research that involves the advancement of theory, although it should be noted that this still occupies the interest of almost two thirds in this group. The early career academics are also significantly less likely to be conducting research that informs their teaching.

Level of appointment appears to be a significant variable in the type of research conducted. Those at lecturer level are least likely to be working on research that involves advancing theory, or working on professional, business or industry related research. Lecturers are also significantly more likely to say they have conducted research directed to inform their teaching (Appendix A, Table A25).

### 5.2.2 Institutional type

The institutional differences in the types of research conducted are predictable but, nonetheless, striking. The data in Table 5.7 show that academics in the new universities are significantly less likely than those in either the old or mid-period universities to engage in research that involves advancing theory. On the other hand, the research they do conduct is significantly more likely to be in applied research. In terms of the use of research to inform teaching, there is a strong and significant contrast between academics in the new and old universities, and also

between those in the old and mid universities. It is interesting to note that the academics in the mid-period universities are significantly more likely to conduct policy research than those in the old universities.

**Table 5.7      Types of research: institutional differences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Old N=462	Mid N=450	New N=604
Advancing theory	75	70	54*
Applied professional, business or industry related	53	52	66*
Directed to inform teaching	27	36	41*
Policy oriented	24	34*	29

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-Square test of independence)

### 5.2.3      Field of study differences

There are significant and fairly predictable differences between academics from the three representative fields of study. The results in Table 5.8 show a significantly higher proportion of Humanities group academics are engaged in advancing theory, and they are much more likely than both other groups to do research that informs their teaching. The Engineering group are far more likely than the other groups to be involved in applied research. Although low in relative terms, the proportion of those in the Humanities group engaged in applied research (42%) is still, quite sizeable and the differences between all three groups is significant. The Business group clearly stand out for their significantly stronger focus on policy oriented research.

**Table 5.8      Types of research: field of study differences**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Humanities Social Sciences N=381	Engineering Architecture Agriculture N=162	Business Admin. N=180
Advancing theory	71	60	59*
Applied professional, business or industry related	42	82	64*
Directed to inform teaching	51	26	32*
Policy oriented	35	14	49*

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-Square test of independence)

## 5.3 Factors hindering research

As with teaching, respondents were asked to rate on a five point scale each of four factors that hinder their research. Table 5.9 shows that more than two thirds of academics (65%) find their teaching load is a hindrance to research and 47 per cent say that difficulty obtaining funding is a problem. On the other hand only 24 per cent blame lack of support from their department as a factor that hinders their research, and just 20 per cent identify inadequate research equipment as an issue.

**Table 5.9 Factors hindering research**

(% responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Not hindered			Greatly hindered		N/A
Teaching load	10	9	14	28	37	1
Difficulty obtaining funding	17	14	20	23	24	3
Lack of support from your department for your research interests	38	18	19	14	10	2
Inadequate research equipment	38	17	16	12	8	9

### 5.3.1 Gender and level of appointment

Table 5.10 shows the gender differences in the level of agreement ('hindered' and 'greatly hindered') with the items. Females are significantly more likely than males to see their teaching load as an obstacle to their research and they are also more likely to say that lack of support from their department is a problem—however, relative to the other issues, the percentage (28%) is small. Although the difference is not statistically significant, a slightly higher proportion of females than males (52% cf 46%) believe that difficulty in getting funding hinders their research. Males, however, are more likely to say that inadequate research equipment is a factor hindering their research.

Career stage differences are shown in Appendix A, Table A26. Late career academics are far less likely to see their teaching load as a hindrance to research (59%) and somewhat less likely to cite problems in getting funding (43%) as an obstacle. Interestingly, mid-career academics are more likely to be affected by the lack of support from their department for their research interests. There are no significant differences by career with respect to the inadequacy of research equipment.

The level of appointment differences in perceptions of obstacles to research are quite marked (Appendix A, Table A27). The direction of the differences is predictable: the lower the level the more likely academics find their research hindered by all four of the factors listed. Lecturers and senior lecturers are similar in most respects, being particularly hindered by their teaching load (77% cf 72%),



difficulty obtaining funding (53% cf 52%), lack of department support for their research interests (30% cf 25%) and inadequate research equipment (25% cf 25%). Despite their relatively lower teaching loads, 61 per cent of associate professors and 32 per cent of professors still see teaching loads as an obstacle to their research.

**Table 5.10 Factors hindering research: gender differences**

(‘hindered’ and ‘greatly hindered’ collapsed from 5 point scale % responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Male N= 1 087	Female N=465
Teaching load	64	71*
Difficulty obtaining funding	46	52
Lack of support from your department for your research interests	22	28*
Inadequate research equipment	23	19*

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney test)

### 5.3.2 Institutional type

Teaching load is far more likely to be seen by academics in the new universities to be hindering research. Those in the new and mid-period universities are more likely than those in the old institutions to be hindered by lack of support from their department for their research interests (Table 5.11). While the differences are not significant, it is interesting to note the lower proportion (19%) of those in the mid-period universities who are hindered by inadequate research equipment.

**Table 5.11 Factors hindering research: institutional differences**

(‘hindered’ and ‘greatly hindered’ collapsed from 5 point scale % responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Old N=462	Mid N=450	New N=604
Teaching load	55	67	73
Difficulty obtaining funding	48	44	51
Lack of support from your department for your research interests	18	25	27
Inadequate research equipment	24	19	23

### 5.3.3 Field of study differences

Perhaps the most interesting pattern of responses in Table 5.12 is the similarity across the fields of study on the impact of teaching on research—it is uniformly high. Although the differences in perceived lack of department support are not

statistically significant, those in the Business group are the least hindered in this respect.

**Table 5.12 Factors hindering research: field of study differences**

('hindered' and 'greatly hindered' collapsed from 5 point scale % responses mainstream cohort; N= 1 554)

	Humanities Social Sciences (N=381)	Engineering Architecture Agriculture (N=162)	Business Admin. (N=180)
Teaching load	69	67	71
Difficulty obtaining funding	47	54	35*
Lack of support from your department for your research interests	27	24	18
Inadequate research equipment	17	36	14*

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney test)

There are, of course, unsurprising differences in the role of funding as a hindrance with the Business group being least hindered (35%) and the Engineering group being most hindered (54%). Likewise, the same pattern applies to the quality of research equipment: the Engineering group are by far the most hindered (36%).

## 5.4 Trends in the factors hindering research 1993–99

There has been little change in the Australian sample over the last five years in terms of the main factors that hinder research. The full data is shown (Table 5.13) to indicate the stability of the responses from 1993–1999. Some minor shifts that might be noted, none of them statistically significant, include: an increase of five per cent overall who say that their teaching load does not hinder their research; a five per cent increase in those who are strongly hindered by difficulty obtaining funding; and a very slight drop of three per cent in those who are not hindered by the lack of support from their department.

The only statistically significant difference is with respect to inadequate research equipment. Academics in 1999 are less likely than those in 1993 to cite inadequate research equipment as a hindrance to their research—this is a decline in the overall level of hindrance from 27 per cent to 22 per cent.

**Table 5.13 Factors hindering research 1993–1999**

(% responses 1993 N=1 340; 1999 mainstream cohort N=1 554)

		Not hindered			Greatly hindered	
Teaching load	1993	6	9	19	33	34
	1999	11	9	14	28	37
Difficulty obtaining funding	1993	14	16	22	30	19
	1999	17	14	21	24	24
Lack of support from your department for your research interests	1993	38	22	19	13	8
	1999	39	18	19	14	10
Inadequate research equipment	1993	35	21	18	17	10
	1999	41	19	18	14	8

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## 6. Casual and part-time academics

Although a clear majority of academic and general staff are still employed full-time, there has been a rapid growth of those in fractional full-time and casual higher positions over the last decade. The proportion of all full-time staff declined from 83.6 per cent in 1988 to 76.3 per cent in 1998 (DETYA 1999). Relatively little is known of the work-related values and attitudes of the casual/part-time academics; these are explored in this chapter largely by comparison with those of the mainstream group. It is clear from DETYA analysis of trends that 'the increase in casual employment of academic staff was overwhelmingly for staff undertaking teaching only' (DETYA 1999). A separate section of the questionnaire explored the employment situation of this group of 464 respondents.

Almost half the sub-sample (49.1%) were in the early career stage (i.e. seven years or less), a clear majority were female (61%), and 42 per cent were Lecturer A or B level appointments. Eighty-four per cent were working in academic departments or schools, and 14 per cent were employed in research centres. The group was represented across the institutional types (37% old, 33% mid, 26% new). About half came from the Humanities or Health Sciences but all fields were represented.

Most of the part-time and casual academics were involved in teaching undergraduates (64%) and in research (59%). A smaller proportion were engaged in postgraduate teaching (26%), administration (23%), and post-graduate supervision (18%). A higher proportion of males (71%) said they were teaching undergraduates than females (59%) while more females (63%) than males (53%) were involved in research. The casual/part-time staff in the new universities were more likely to be involved in teaching (77%) and a far smaller proportion were working on research (29%).

Sixty per cent of the sub-sample received income from other jobs and 25 per cent had two or more jobs. Other than the university from which they responded, 39 per cent of these academics received income from consultancies, 27 per cent from other universities, and 17 per cent from their own business.

The sample was divided on the crucial issue of why they held a part-time or casual position. Forty-two per cent said it was because they preferred working on a part-time or casual basis, while 30 per cent said it was because a full-time position was not available. Twenty per cent had chosen part-time positions because they were working on a doctorate and 18 per cent because they were supplementing their income. The responses were, of course, mixed.

## 6.1 Career interest and commitment

On the whole, as the data in Table 6.1 suggest, the casual/part-time academics are more likely to have a primary interest in teaching and less likely to be interested in pursuing both teaching and research.

**Table 6.1 Strength of career interest**

(% responses 'strongly agree' and 'agree' casual/part-time N=464 and mainstream full-time N=1 554)

	Casual & Part-time	Full- time
I have an interest in both teaching and research	52	73*
I have a much stronger career interest in research than teaching	35	42*
I have a much stronger career interest in teaching than research	41	21*
I have a much stronger career interest in administration than in teaching and research	5	5

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney test)

The nature and level of commitment of the casual/part-time academics differs in some important respects to the full-time academics. It should be noted that the percentages in Table 6.2 have been calculated from those for whom the categories were in fact applicable.

Somewhat more of the casual/part-time academics are committed to undergraduate teaching (78%) than research (74%). The major difference shown in Table 6.2 is that considerably fewer of the casual/part-time academics are committed to research than the mainstream full-time academics (74% cf 87%). The casual/part-time staff are also significantly less committed to the publication of research findings and the presentation of research at conferences. It is hardly surprising, given their lack of opportunity for ongoing involvement, that far fewer are committed to thesis supervision or committee work.

**Table 6.2**      **Level of commitment**

(% responses 'strongly committed' and 'committed' casual/part-time N=464 and mainstream full-time N=1 554)

	Casual & Part-time	Full-time
Research activity	74	87*
Postgraduate thesis supervision	48	82*
Publication of research findings	62	81*
Undergraduate teaching	78	81
Pastoral care of students	62	68*
Presentation of research at conferences	52	67*
Postgraduate coursework teaching	60	66
Community service	47	41
Committee work	19	29*
Administrative work	19	25*

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney test)

The differences in motives and satisfaction shown in Table 6.3 certainly make sense given the fundamental difference in the nature of the part-time and full-time engagement with the workplace. What we do not know from this investigation is the extent to which casual/part-time workers have made a deliberate choice to work in the way they do, or whether limited opportunities have shaped their responses. This may account for the mixed messages from what appears to be two sub-groups of casual/part-time respondents. The response to the item regarding work commitments leaving little time is open to interpretation.

The casual/part-time academics are clearly less likely to subordinate their lives for their work than the full-time mainstream academics and their jobs are apparently less stressful. Somewhat surprisingly, they are no more likely than the mainstream to be looking for a change of position, they are less pessimistic about the future prospects for young academics, and they are clearly more satisfied with their job. At the same time, considerably fewer than the mainstream would choose to be an academic if they had the choice again.

**Table 6.3**      **Motives, outlooks and satisfaction**

(% responses 'strongly agree' and 'agree' casual/part-time N=464 and mainstream full-time N=1 554)

	Casual & Part-time	Full-time
I am more motivated by intrinsic interests in my work than by material rewards	73	75*
I subordinate most aspects of my life for my work	29	51*
My work commitments leave me very little time to myself	37	60*
My job is a source of considerable stress	36	56*
My overall satisfaction with my job has improved over the last 5 years	38	30*
I am actively seeking a change of job at the moment	18	18
This is not a good time for any young person to aspire to an academic career in my discipline	45	61*
If I had the choice again I would choose to be an academic	39	52*
Generally speaking I am satisfied with my job	61	52*

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney test)

In Table 6.4 the responses to items concerning salary and conditions show a similarly low level of satisfaction with salary for both casual/part-time and mainstream academics. Otherwise there are large differences in satisfaction. It is no surprise that casual/part-time academics are far less satisfied with their job security (33 per cent were very dissatisfied as against 19 per cent of the mainstream). Likewise, of those who get study leave, only a minority of the casual/part-time academics were satisfied with study leave, conference and travel policy—a substantial minority are not eligible for these benefits. Of particular interest is the response to the final item: casual/part-time academics are clearly less satisfied with the opportunity to pursue their own interests, for 21 per cent it is obviously not a relevant consideration.

There are some gender differences here of interest concerning satisfaction with salary and job security. Female casual/part-time academics are less satisfied with their salary than males (31% cf 36%), and also with job security (18% cf 24%). In other respects, they are essentially of the same view.

There are also some institutional differences worth noting. Casual/part-time academics in the old universities are more likely to be satisfied with the opportunity to pursue their academic interests than those in the mid-period or new universities (53% cf 41% cf 46%).

**Table 6.4** Satisfaction with salary and work benefits

(% responses 'very satisfied' and 'satisfied' combined casual/part-time N=464 and mainstream full-time N= 1 554)

	Casual & Part-time %	(N/A)	Full-time
Your academic salary	33	(3)	30*
Security of your job	20	(10)	42*
Study leave policy	29	(43)	46*
Conference attendance and travel policy	29	(28)	41*
Opportunity to pursue your own academic interests	47	(21)	53*

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney test)

## 6.2 Hours of work

It is not particularly meaningful to report the working hours of the casual/part-time academics in detail since there is such diversity across the sub-sample in the patterns of activity. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the mean hours worked by this group barely change during the year with 26.7 hours per week in the teaching period and 27.3 hours during the non-teaching period. There are no gender differences of any note. The mean teaching hours are 11.7 per week in the teaching period (i.e. 5.3 hours in class, 5.8 hours on teaching related tasks, and .6 hours on thesis supervision). Again, it is no surprise that casual/part-time academics spend a considerably lower proportion of their time than the mainstream on administration (8.1% cf 15.7%).

## 6.3 Approaches to teaching methods and assessment

Thirty-one per cent of the casual/part-time academics had received some training for teaching at the beginning of their careers and 20 per cent had some training in the last two years. This was slightly lower than the mainstream in both respects.

The differences in the take-up of new approaches to teaching and learning between the casual/part-time and the mainstream full-time academics is striking. Combining the categories of 'started using' and 'using more' in Table 6.5 gives an indication of the level of change for the two sub-groups. The 'Not Applicable' category is taken to mean that the methods listed have not been applied.

The most obvious difference between the two groups is the overall lack of change in the casual/part-time group. They are more likely to respond 'not applicable' and the rate of adoption of new methods is considerably lower on all methods.



**Table 6.5**      **Change in teaching methods**

(% responses casual/part-time (C/PT), N=464 mainstream full-time (FT), N=1 554)

	START/MORE		N/ A	
	C/PT	FT	C/PT	FT
Distance-based learning approaches	25	44	75	55
Computer-assisted course delivery	49	70	50	28
Multimedia technology	54	68	44	30
Collaborative learning strategies	51	61	46	35
Problem-based learning	61	69	35	27

There are four differences in change factors of statistical significance shown in Table 6.6. The casual/part-time academics are less likely to be influenced by increasing student numbers, perceptions of resource and funding problems, or the availability of technology. And they are also less likely to make changes on their initiative. Their responses are similar to that of the full-time academics with respect to the impact of university or department policy, student demand, pressure from colleagues, the availability of extra resources, or shortage of space.

**Table 6.6**      **Factors influencing change in teaching methods**

(% responses casual/part-time (C/PT), N=464 mainstream full-time (FT) N=1 554)

Changes in teaching methods	Casual/PT	F/T
Your own initiative/decision	70	78*
Availability of technology	64	72*
University/Department policy	44	46
Student demand/feedback	40	42
Increased student numbers	24	39*
Resource constraints/lack of funding	21	31*
Pressure from colleagues	16	14
Availability of extra resources/funding	10	10
Shortage of space	6	7

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-square test of independence)

Although casual/part-time academics may not be involved in formulating assessment requirements, their attitude towards assessment shown in Table 6.7 may have some impact on policy and practice, particularly if it is at odds with the mainstream values. It seems that, on the whole, the casual/part-time academics and the full-time mainstream group are fairly similar in their views as to what should be assessed. The major difference concerns the smaller proportion of casual/part-time academics (75%) who believe that depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject, and written communication skills, should be

assessed. Of course, variation in disciplinary context is an important influence on these perceptions as noted earlier.

**Table 6.7 What should be assessed**

(% responses casual/part-time (C/PT), N=464 mainstream full-time (FT), N=1 554)

	Casual/PT	F/T
Depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject	75	84*
Ability to think critically and to reason	83	87
Written communication skills	73	79*
Problem solving skills	78	81
Verbal communication skills	67	73
Ability to memorise	17	18
Diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses	63	63

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-square test of independence)

Finally, the differences between the casual/part-time academics and the mainstream on the factors that hinder teaching (Table 6.8) are important in four respects. Firstly, significantly fewer of the casual/part-time academics are hindered by having to teach outside their subjects of expertise or current research commitments. Secondly, they are less concerned than full-time staff about having to teach too many students and, far fewer are hindered by teaching across too wide a range of student abilities.

**Table 6.8 Factors hindering teaching**

(% responses 'hindered' and 'greatly hindered' casual/part-time, N=464 mainstream full-time (FT) N=1 554)

	Casual/PT	F/T
Having to teach subjects outside your area of expertise	10	20*
Current research commitments	20	26*
Lack of up-to-date equipment/technology	27	30
Too many students	31	46*
Too wide a range of students' abilities	33	50*

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney test)

## 6.4 Research

The types of research in which casual/part-time academics are engaged are primarily concerned with advancing theory (55%) and applied professional,

business or related (49%). Less than a quarter (23%) conducted research directed to inform their teaching.

They are similar to the mainstream group in their high level of intrinsic interest in research. However, as indicated in Table 6.9, in most other respects raised in the questionnaire they are only slightly different in motives. Although the difference is not significant, it is interesting to note the higher proportion of casual/part-time academics who say they do research to provide stimulus to their teaching. The only significant difference between the two groups here concerns the much lower proportion of the casual/part-time academics who say they do research to get publications.

**Table 6.9 Major reasons for doing research/consultancy**

(% responses casual/part-time, N=464 mainstream full-time (FT), N=1 554)

	Casual/PT	F/T
Because you enjoy it, it motivates you and it interests you	88	91
To get publications	37	60*
To increase your department's income or profile	35	37
To increase your chance of security, tenure or promotion	51	57
To give inputs and stimulus to your teaching	59	52

\* significant at .05 level (Chi-square test of independence)

The factors that hinder the research of the casual/part-time academics are not the same as for the mainstream (Table 6.10). Far fewer are hindered by their teaching load (45% cf 66%). A higher proportion cite lack of funding as a hindrance to their research (55% cf 48%) although this is not a significant difference between the two groups.

**Table 6.10 Factors hindering research**

(% responses 'hindered' and 'greatly hindered' casual/part-time (C/PT), N=464 mainstream full-time (FT), N=1 554)

	Casual/PT	F/T
Teaching load	45	66*
Difficulty obtaining funding	55	48
Lack of support from your department for your research interests	25	24
Inadequate research equipment	23	22

\* significant at .05 level (Mann-Whitney test)

## 7. Towards new balance or new divides?

The main purpose of this investigation was to identify trends in the work roles and outlooks of academics in Australian universities over the last five years. During that time it has been widely held that the workloads of academics have increased along with unacceptably high levels of associated dissatisfaction and stress for many individuals. It has also been observed that the nature of academic work is changing radically in the face of new demands on the higher education sector.

The results of the national survey provided in the preceding chapters show that while some core values and motives appear to be stable, there have been some sharp shifts in the outlooks of academics in Australian universities in the space of just five years. In general terms, a clear majority of academics continue to say they are more motivated by intrinsic interests than by material rewards in the work they do, and there has been little change over the last five years in the proportion who say they subordinate most aspects of their lives for their work. However, since 1993 there has been a dramatic decline in the level of overall satisfaction.

The low overall level of job satisfaction is mostly the result of low levels of satisfaction with salary and other benefits. However, embedded within the relevant attitudinal scale is a major decline in a primary source of intrinsic satisfaction for academics: the opportunity to pursue their own academic interests. It is hardly surprising that academics faced with a seriously low level of satisfaction with salary and related benefits—especially a loss in sense of job security—combined with a perception of less control over their work agendas are increasingly negative in outlook. The possibility of trading off poor work conditions against the intrinsic rewards of academic work is much less of an option for an increasing number.

Other more specific sources of dissatisfaction concern the growing perception that core academic work is hindered by a series of obstacles and distractions, from too many students to too much administration. Particularly noteworthy is the increase in the proportion of academics who say their teaching is hindered by the demands of research, having to deal with too wide a range of students' abilities, and too many students.

Nevertheless, it remains true that, as in the last national survey, few academics are actively looking for alternative employment, and it is still the case that they maintain a high level of commitment to the intrinsic value of the work they do.

## 7.1 Workloads

Although the average working week has increased to almost 50 hours, the more telling result from the survey is that a substantial group of 40 per cent are now working more than 50 hours a week. The time given to the major activities has generally followed a similar pattern over the last 20 years or so, but it is noteworthy that there has been a significant decline in the proportion of time given to teaching. While there has been a slight increase in the time given to research, there has been a significant increase in the time given to the activities classified as administration which now take up the equivalent of one 'normal' working day per week.

Slightly more than half of the sample believed their hours had substantially increased over the previous five years. What accounts for this change is not so much the increase in class contact hours but the teaching related activities. The activities contributing to the increased hours is fairly predictable: at the head of the list are committee work, liaising with administrators, providing academic support for students, seeking funds, and developing course materials for new technologies. The last three quite clearly reflect the impact of the changing realities of universities: the need to be student-centred, market-oriented, and innovative in their approaches to course delivery.

The contrast between realities and work preferences shown in Chapter Three suggests that, far from looking backwards for a leisurely existence, academics have a realistic sense of the kind of working hours that might optimise their productivity and satisfaction. In a sense these concerns are a sign of the times as academics find themselves in the same boat as the rest of the overworked population. There is a difference however that is crucial for the future of the profession and the universities. The daily distractions from the core work of teaching and research continue to grow, and the risk of undermining the traditional work motives of academics increases.

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## 7.2 Responding to change: Stretching or adapting?

Coaldrake makes the point that academic work has 'stretched rather than adapted to meet the challenges posed by transformations of the higher education sector' (Coaldrake 1999:3). The pressure on academics to improve the quality of their teaching, and to embrace innovations in a variety of aspects, was the focus of Chapter Four. The perceived obstacles to effective teaching were also examined. In broad terms, it appears that most academics say they have started using, or have increased their use of, new technologies for teaching. There is some doubt as to how sharply the respondents define innovations and new technologies. There is a need to examine this more closely. Nevertheless, given that two-thirds say their workload has been increased by work associated with new teaching technologies it is reasonable to assume that there is a high level of innovative activity across the system.

Similarly, a large proportion of academics say they are incorporating new approaches such as collaborative learning and problem-based learning into their teaching. If the responses to the items on changes to teaching are any indication, it seems that academics have adapted in large numbers to the press for innovative approaches. For most there is little choice but to adapt in this area of work: only a small group appear unaffected by the demands to rethink approaches to teaching.

An underlying question—of increasing urgency for both national policy and institutional management—is the extent to which all academics in Australian universities can and should be both teachers and researchers. Not surprisingly, a clear majority of academics continue to profess an interest in both activities. However, since the 1993 survey there has been a significant increase of six percent in the proportion of those who say they have a stronger interest in research over teaching, and a decline of five per cent who say they prefer teaching over research.

Of course, this work preference is closely tied to the prevailing reward system which compounds the daily dissonance experienced by academics in the priorities they attach to the research they do, and the realities of new demands with respect to teaching and administration. The overwhelming majority of academics believe the current promotion system rewards research. The ability to attract funds is close behind. Less than half of those surveyed saw teaching as rewarded in the current promotions system. The contrast with what academics believe ought to be rewarded—teaching and research on an equal footing—exacerbating the frequently cited problem of personal tension in setting and maintaining work priorities.

Methods used to assess the performance of students are a crucial indicator of underlying beliefs and values about the purposes of teaching and learning. The responses suggest that most academics would like to give more emphasis than is currently the case, to critical thinking skills and verbal communication skills. This appears to be a vote of support for the growing interest in generic skills along the lines measured by national performance indicators. Also interesting is the belief that assessment should provide diagnostic measures of students' strengths and weaknesses. Taken in the context of the larger numbers of students presenting a wide range of abilities, this suggests a majority of academics see a need to understand better the learning needs of students. This is no doubt in part due to their perception that students increasingly have more diverse and complex needs.

Despite the obstacles to effective and satisfying teaching cited in the report, and the new and rapidly changing demands, academics are typically facing these issues with little or no formal training in teaching methods. Most learn as they go. About one third had some training at the beginning of their careers and only a quarter had engaged in some professional development for teaching in the two years prior to the survey. It is somewhat disturbing to note that of those who received some form of training—either at the start of their careers or more recently—most found it only 'fairly helpful'. There is therefore a major issue for universities to do with the nature and quality of induction of academics into their

teaching roles and the credibility of ongoing professional development programmes.

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## 7.3 Diversity in experiences and outlooks

While it is true that most academics are increasingly finding their experience of work negative, there are important differences in outlooks within the profession. It is still the case, as it was in 1993, that a substantial proportion of academics are quite positive about their work and their futures. And it also continues to be true that the negative experiences reported from this survey are not evenly shared across the profession.

### 7.3.1 Gender

On matters of work motives and satisfaction there is little difference between males and females. A notably higher proportion of females are stressed and say they give up more of their lives to their work. Females are, however, more likely to say their job satisfaction has improved over the last five years. They are also likely to be more satisfied with their salaries than males. On the other hand, females are much less likely than males to be satisfied with the opportunities they have to pursue their own academic interests.

The sexes are fairly similar in their perceptions of the current reward system although fewer females believe that teaching is rewarded and more believe that attracting funds is currently an important criteria for promotion. Although the sexes spend a similar amount of time overall, females report significantly more time on teaching related activities and less on thesis supervision and research. The responses of females on a number of dimensions of work satisfaction need closer examination. They appear to be influenced by their predominance in the early and mid career stage.

### 7.3.2 Career stage

A key finding of a DETYA analysis of the changing profile of university staff for the period 1989 to 1998 was that 'there was a polarisation of the academic structure with the most sustained growth in the most senior and the most junior classifications' (DETYA 1999:1). The contrasts between early, mid and late career academics stand out on a range of dimensions, but especially on job satisfaction and outlooks. There are some predictable shifts in the hours worked that come with increased responsibility.

There are, however, few differences of note in the results between career stages in terms of perceptions of the reward system. The late-career academics are the most negative about their job satisfaction, and for most it has seriously deteriorated over the last five years. They are extremely pessimistic about the

future prospects for young academics. It is hardly surprising though that they are the most satisfied about their job security (although that means a bare 51 per cent) and it is also the case that they believe they have relatively greater freedom to pursue their own academic interests. They do, however, work significantly longer hours than the other two groups, largely a consequence of their administrative responsibilities.

The mid-career academics are distinguished by the fact that they are far more likely than the other two groups to be stressed and overworked. They appear to be especially prone to carrying the burden of managing the competing demands of teaching, research and administration.

Finally, the early career academics are much more satisfied with their jobs and less negative about future prospects. Finkelstein, Seal and Schuster in their discussion of a 'profession in transformation' make the point that the two generations of academics in the United States—the new and old—differ more in 'who they are than what they do' (1998:103). We are left with the question as to whether or not the influence of professional socialisation is so strong that the next generation of academics in Australia will sustain their positive and optimistic outlooks, or whether they will fall inevitably into the relatively negative patterns of their senior colleagues. Since most of this early career group have only experienced academic life in the nineties, it is reasonable to assume that their perceptions are less influenced by contrasts with the past era that many older academics clearly regard as better days. From a policy and leadership perspective it seems wise to at least start with the assumption that this early career generation deserve to have their enthusiasm for academic work reinforced at every opportunity.

### **7.3.3 Institutional type**

On matters of work motives, outlooks and job satisfaction, there are few differences between academics from the three institutional types. Likewise the level of satisfaction with security of tenure is low regardless of institutional type. That the profession as a whole is suffering high levels of stress and low levels of satisfaction, regardless of broad institutional contextual differences, is noteworthy.

The academics from each institutional type differ somewhat in their perceptions of the reward system, reflecting some key institutional differences in terms of history and mission. Although the total hours of work and the amount of time spent on administration are about the same across the institutions, there are marked differences in the emphasis given to research and teaching.

In the old universities attracting funds is seen as important and less emphasis is placed on the rewards for committee work or community service. Academics in the old universities spend significantly more time on research and on thesis supervision, whereas academics in the mid-period institutions are more likely to say that teaching is actually valued in the promotions system—but still only 50



per cent of them. They are also more inclined to see committee work and community service rewarded.

Those in the new institutions are significantly less likely to have autonomy to pursue their own academic interests. They are also more likely to spend significantly more time on teaching and teaching related activities.

### **7.3.4 Field of study**

It was noted from the outset that three broad fields of study were selected to illustrate potential sources of difference in the experience of changes to academic work roles. There is little difference in their perceptions of salary and work benefits. However, there are notable differences in terms of specific work motives. While they report about the same total class contact hours per week, and little variation in the amount of time they spend on research, they differ significantly in terms of their overall working hours and the time spent on teaching.

The Humanities/Social Science group are most likely to subordinate their lives for their work and were most pessimistic about the future of their profession. They work significantly longer hours and spend more time on teaching-related activities.

The Engineering, Architecture, Agriculture group stand out because they are more likely to say their work left them little time for anything else. However, in terms of their self-reported workload, they work about the same hours as those in the Humanities group, but spend significantly more time on thesis supervision than both other groups. They are more inclined to say that they would not choose to become academics if they had the choice again. They are also unlike the other two groups to the extent that they are slightly less likely to believe that teaching should be recognised in promotions, more likely to believe that attracting funds should be a priority for promotions, and, somewhat more likely to rate committee work highly.

Of the three groups, the Business group are generally more positive in outlook, the least stressed and relatively most satisfied with their jobs. They are also were considerably more satisfied with the opportunity to pursue their own academic interests. They work significantly less hours than those in the Humanities, the least amount of time on administration, and significantly less time on thesis supervision.

### **7.3.5 Part-time and casuals**

While the extent of casualisation is now better understood and included in DETYA reporting, the nature of the work and the motives, values and outlooks of this growing group are poorly understood. It is far too simplistic to assume that all casual staff are young recent graduates frustrated in their career aspirations and exploited in their work environment. As indicated in the previous

chapter, it appears that there are three sub-groups within those defined as casual and part-time: there is a large group who prefer working part-time and a group (almost a third) looking unsuccessfully for a full-time position. A third group could be described as 'in transition' supplementing their income or working towards a doctorate.

Overall, and contrary to expectations, the part-time and casual group are generally more satisfied with their jobs and more positive in outlook. Some may well have aimed for a more balanced lifestyle, others may have less ambitious expectations than their full-time colleagues. The group of academic staff below lecturer classification now represents 27 per cent of the academic staff (DETYA 1999). If it is true as the DETYA analysis suggests, that budget pressures have encouraged institutions to recruit at the lowest academic entry level, and that a high proportion are part-time and casual, then the deployment of this group presents a considerable challenge. Given the increasing reliance of universities on these workers it is important that their work roles and values are better understood, particularly since they are so often crucial to the success of teaching programmes.

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## 7.4 Conclusions

As academics confront the growing pressures of competing demands on their time, they are, collectively and individually, faced with the choice of attempting to find new ways of balancing traditional work patterns or, alternatively, concentrating their energies on a narrower set of more specialised activities. At the most basic level this amounts to a choice between finding creative solutions in the management of the tension between teaching and research, or simply opting to give more substantial, if not exclusive, weight to either teaching or research. There is, as ever, a point somewhere between these extremes. However, finding new ways to manage the diverse configurations of academic time and commitment is a major task for all stakeholders, not just the academics.

If the results of this survey are any guide, we have possibly reached a limit to the total time academics can reasonably be expected to spend on their work, even with their propensity for altruistic commitment. We are perhaps at a critical point for the academic profession where the amount of hours worked, and the diffusion and fragmentation of tasks seriously threatens the quality of both research and teaching. The management of academic work is one of the biggest challenges facing Australian universities. But as Tierney suggests, 'the future of academic life cannot rely on easy assumptions that we should all be doing similar tasks in similar ways' (Tierney 1999:52). A creative reassessment of academic work roles and expectations is needed.