



Editorial

In February 2014 Universities Australia announced an initiative to improve the employability of graduates. At the heart of this initiative was an agreement with business groups to collaborate on vocational training to assist students in participating in Work Integrated Learning (WIL). It was expected that WIL would include, for example, work placements which earned credit points in university course work, mentoring, volunteer work experience programs, and internships. Signatories to the agreement included Universities Australia, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Business Council of Australia, among others. This was clearly a much needed initiative to develop a shared understanding of the importance of WIL and to mitigate some of the issues such as availability of opportunities.

Twelve months on and the significance of such a collaboration and a commitment to the implementation of strategies to support WIL was echoed by the recent analysis, by Britain's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, of the findings of a review of 200 universities and colleges. Reported in the *University World News* (January 16, 2015) the findings indicate that engagement with employers enables graduates to develop and demonstrate work, and work-place appropriate, skills, knowledge, understandings and expertise. Such engagement might include participation by employers in the approval, review and monitoring of courses, in the delivery of the curriculum and by providing opportunities for staff to sustain industry knowledge and experience. While the report is based on UK higher education institutions, its findings have relevance globally and for all institutions concerned about the employability of their graduates.

The Global Employability University Ranking published by the *International New York Times* late last year provides an interesting perception of the employability of Australian graduates. The ranking, developed following interviews with 4,500 recruiters (100 from Australia participated) in 20 different countries provides an overview of today's best universities in terms of the employability of graduates. This ranking, unlike more prominent rankings, focuses not on academic achievement in terms of research and teaching, but on the working skills of graduates, from a broad range of countries. Those interviewed were recruitment managers with at least four years of professional experience and with experience with graduates from countries other than their own. Australia had just four universities ranked in the top 150, the first coming in at number 23. However when the recruiters were asked, based on their own experience, which of the foreign countries produce the most employable graduates, Australia was ranked 8th. Clearly initiatives which can build on and enhance this reputation will enable Australian graduates to be competitive globally.

With more and more attention on the value of a university education as preparation for life and work, we look forward to exploring relevant strategies, issues and debate through this year's papers and on behalf of our editorial committee encourage your participation, through this Journal, in the scholarship of learning and teaching for effective graduate employability.

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