



AAH Policy

NATIONAL PRIORITY INDUSTRY LINKAGES FUND CONSULTATION PAPER OCTOBER 2020

The [Australian Academy of the Humanities](http://www.humanities.org.au) (the Academy) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the NPILF consultation paper (the Paper). In our submission we focus on the principles, aspirations and intended outcomes of the NPILF.

The Academy is **supportive of a broad definition of industry** employed in the Paper: ‘as ‘business, government and the community sector, as all play a critical role in our national prosperity and wellbeing’ (p.9).

The Academy is **supportive of university-industry ‘compact-type’ arrangements which take account of local operating environments, economies and communities**: ‘Naturally, the nature of collaboration will vary depending on a university’s mission and strengths, as well as local industry needs’ (p.8).

The Academy is **supportive of the responsible use of metrics and a mix of ‘fit for purpose’ qualitative and quantitative indicators**. In particular, we welcome the Department’s approach to ‘prevent[ing] use of simplistic metrics which reinforce outdated engagement modes such as number of commercialisations’ (p.10).

We do have concerns with elements of the NPILF, which we believe will impact on its effectiveness and ability to deliver on its stated objective of ‘incentivis[ing] universities to strengthen existing partnerships, create partnerships and expand to new industries’. Some of the concerns we raise here pick up on more detailed submissions on the Job-ready Graduates package and the Inquiry into Australia’s Cultural and Creative Industries and Institutions.¹

The Academy is, in principle, supportive of the work integrated learning (WIL) and Industry-University Partnerships components of the NPILF, because both have been modelled inclusively, but **we question the effectiveness of the so-called ‘STEM +’ component, which is unnecessarily limiting and not in touch with the needs of a 21st century workforce**.

To focus on STEM and single out ‘architecture and building’ and ‘allied health’ in the STEM+ formulation runs counter to the needs of Australia’s economic development and innovation in

¹ AAH Submission to the Higher Education Support Amendment (HESA) Bill 2020 – Job-Ready Graduates and Supporting Regional and Remote Students https://www.humanities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/200817-AAH-Policy-Job-Ready-Legislation_final.pdf and AAH Submission to the Inquiry into Australia’s Cultural and Creative Industries and Institutions, available here https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Communications/Arts/Submissions

COVID-19 recovery and beyond, and specifically to the wide range of industry sectors that rely on graduates trained in the humanities and SHAPE fields.²

Australia needs to incentivise a workforce agenda that mobilises the capabilities across both SHAPE and STEM. A 2017 OECD report found that Australia’s innovation skills remain weak, and recommended that government widen ‘the scope of subsidies for innovation-related subjects beyond STEM’.³ A report led by our Academy for the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA), found that skills mixing – bringing together teams trained in both the STEM and SHAPE disciplines – gave innovative Australian enterprises a competitive advantage.⁴ ACOLA’s report on Artificial Intelligence also examines the broad range of SHAPE and STEM capabilities needed into the future.⁵ **NPILF should not reproduce a siloed approach to industry collaboration and workforce development.**

The STEM+ component risks being not ‘fit for purpose’ for local economies and industry needs, such as in Tasmania, where the nature of the ‘Tasmanian workforce and economy [is that] there is high demand and strong employment opportunities for humanities graduates.’⁶ Or in the case of the supply of skills and expertise for the creativity economy – sourced from humanities and arts. The Government’s Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCAR) has undertaken detailed analysis which shows that **there is a strong demand and application for humanities fields, notably media and communications, which is one of the most likely qualifications to be held by those employed in creative occupations**, wherever they are across the economy.⁷ Of the six industries identified by BCAR as the fastest growing industries in 2016-17, three have leading shares of workers with creative qualifications: professional, scientific and technical services; rental, hiring and real estate services; and information, media and telecommunications.

The Academy proposes that the STEM+ component of the NPILF is revisited. The future Australian workforce requires SHAPE plus STEM skills. The framing around STEM limits the reach of this initiative and its capacity to achieve whole-of-sector cultural change. **As it is currently formulated it sends the wrong signals to universities about employability, industry needs, and the future of work.**

We would be pleased to elaborate on this submission and convene further expert input. Please direct your initial inquiries to the Academy’s Executive Director, Dr Christina Parolin on (02) 6125 9860 or christina.parolin@humanities.org.au

² ‘SHAPE’ stands for Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy. The SHAPE agenda originated from a coalition of organisations in the UK including the British Academy, the London School of Economics and the Arts Council England. See <https://thisisshape.org.uk/>

³ OECD (2017) Economic Surveys: Australia <http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Australia-2017-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>

⁴ Cunningham, S., Theilacker, M., Gahan, P., Callan, V. and Rainnie, A. (2016) *Skills and Capabilities for Australian Enterprise Innovation*. Report for the Australian Council of Learned Academies <https://acola.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/saf10-skills-capabilities-enterprise-report.pdf>.

⁵ See <https://acola.org/hs4-artificial-intelligence-australia/>

⁶ Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania, supplementary evidence to Senate Inquiry, available from https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/JobReadyGraduates/Additional_Documents

⁷ See <https://www.communications.gov.au/departmental-news/creative-skills-future-economy>