

MEDIA RELEASE

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It's time to open the door to online education technology

Information technology could transform teaching and learning in higher education, challenging the traditional lecture format, enabling courses to be tailored to student needs, and opening the sector to new higher education providers, according to a Grattan Institute report, [*The online evolution: when technology meets tradition in higher education*](#).

With the rapid rise of MOOCs – massive open online courses – some commentators predict that the internet will replace the classroom.

But Grattan Institute Higher Education Program Director Andrew Norton says online education is more likely to enrich than supplant traditional teaching.

“Despite the hype around purely online education, the big question is not whether online courses will replace classrooms, but whether technology will drive the re-design of teaching and learning,” he says.

“In future we might watch a lecture on our tablet, PC or phone before we go to class to discuss specific problems. We might test ourselves regularly online, exposing what we do and don't know. Use of personal data could lead to courses that adapt to individual student's abilities. The possibilities are vast.”

The report also considers what government should do to ensure that Australian students benefit from new information technology.

Mr Norton says the advance of online learning provides opportunities for new, low-cost entrants into the relatively closed higher education field. The government should reduce expensive requirements for student admission and welfare services that are less relevant for online students.

The government should seek agreements with other countries for mutual recognition of higher education providers. This would give Australian universities more opportunities overseas, and provide Australian students with increased access to innovative higher education providers from other countries.

“Whether they come from Australia or overseas, if their standards are high, government should help new education providers get in the door,” Mr Norton says.

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