

MEDIA RELEASE

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Wanted: better teachers in our universities

The Commonwealth Government should create 2500 teaching- focused positions in universities as part of a national effort to raise the quality of teaching in higher education, a new Grattan Institute report argues.

[Taking university teaching seriously](#) argues that as higher education enrolments expand toward 40 per cent of young people, much more attention needs to be given to how students learn.

“When about a quarter of students going to university on lower entry scores never complete their degrees, the time, talent and money of a large group of people are going to waste,” says Grattan Institute Higher Education Program Director Andrew Norton.

Student surveys suggest that Australian students rate the quality of university teaching less highly than do their American counterparts.

Australians rarely report being pushed to do their best work, are often not actively participating in classes, and have little interaction with academic staff outside of class.

“One problem is that our academic culture is narrowly focused on excellence in research,” Mr Norton says.

“Australian academics are usually appointed for their subject expertise not their teaching skills, and many of them prefer research to teaching.”

Grattan Institute research found that the conventional view in Australian universities that better research led to better teaching was not borne out by the evidence.

Students in high-research environments were no more likely to report satisfaction with teaching than students in low-research environments.

The report proposes a cost-neutral program to create 2500 new jobs over the next six years in order to double the number of teaching- focused positions in Australian universities.

Universities would compete for the positions, and only 12 would receive them, in order to create a critical mass within those institutions to raise the profile and quality of teaching.

“The aim is to create a circuit-breaker to the institutional culture of focusing on research,” Mr Norton says.

“If these positions are successful, they would begin to spread a culture of top-quality teaching right across our higher education system.”

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