

# REVIEW OF AUSTRALIA'S RESEARCH TRAINING SYSTEM – CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

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The Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) is the forum whereby Australia's four independent Learned Academies – Australian Academy of the Humanities, Australian Academy of Science, Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering – come together to contribute to inform national policy and to develop innovative solutions to complex global problems and emerging national needs.

The Minister for Education and Training has commissioned ACOLA to undertake a review of Australia's research training system. ACOLA has established an Expert Working Group to lead the review and ACOLA will deliver its final report to the Australian Government in March 2016.

The Expert Working Group is now calling for written submissions from interested organisations and individuals. **Submissions should be evidence based, provide examples where possible, and address the consultation questions.** A discussion paper exploring the review's terms of reference is [available for reference](#). The closing date for submissions is **Monday 31 August 2015**. Submissions are to be made through the [ACOLA website](#).

## CONSULTATION BACKGROUND

In 2015 the Australian Government will invest over \$980 million in research training through the Research Training Scheme, Australian Postgraduate Awards, and the International Postgraduate Research Scholarships. Higher degree by research (HDR) candidates are the engine of the Australian research system and the knowledge gained through the 9,000 HDR completions each year is substantial and represents a major contribution to Australia's research effort. This investment is in people as well as knowledge and provides a solid foundation on which to secure Australia's position in a rapidly changing world.

Australia faces a range of economic, demographic, environment and health challenges in a period where disruptive technological change is likely to have major impacts. Meeting these challenges will require a highly skilled research workforce in academic and non-academic settings. Responding to this challenge Australia, along with many other advanced economies, has increased the number of HDR candidates it trains each year. Many of these graduates pursue non-academic careers over the long-term, and therefore HDR training needs to produce graduates with transferable skills that allow them to utilise their highly developed research capabilities in a range of settings.

The stock of knowledge produced by these graduates during their research training will help to solve the challenges facing Australia. Equally important are the skills developed during research training and how these can be applied into the future. While seeking to preserve the many positive qualities that have helped ensure that the Australian HDR is held in high regard, this review will explore the attributes that enable a high quality researcher to succeed in a variety of different environments; the skills and capabilities that Australia will need from its HDR graduates in the future; and how the research training system should be structured to achieve this.

## CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

### PRODUCING HIGH QUALITY RESEARCHERS

1. What are the research skills and experiences needed to be an effective researcher?
2. What broader transferable qualities do HDR graduates need to develop to succeed in a wide range of career pathways? Should these skills be assessed, and if so, how?
3. What other broader capabilities should HDR graduates develop during their research training?

### CONTRIBUTING TO AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE PROSPERITY AND WELLBEING

4. What skills and capabilities do employers in Australia need from HDR graduates?
5. What research skills and capabilities are needed to ensure Australia's research system remains internationally competitive?
6. What research skills and capabilities are needed from HDR graduates to ensure Australia is ready to meet current and future social, economic and environmental challenges?

### RESEARCH TRAINING SYSTEM

7. What features of the research training system should be retained to ensure our graduates are internationally competitive?
8. How should the research training system be structured to produce high quality researchers who can contribute to Australia's future prosperity and wellbeing?
9. How can entry and exit pathways to and from research training be better structured?
10. How can barriers to participation in HDR programs be overcome so that more candidates from non-traditional backgrounds, including indigenous students, undertake research training?