AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF
GRADUATE RESEARCH

Welcome

Prof Sue Berners-Price

Convenor

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF
GRADUATE RESEARCH

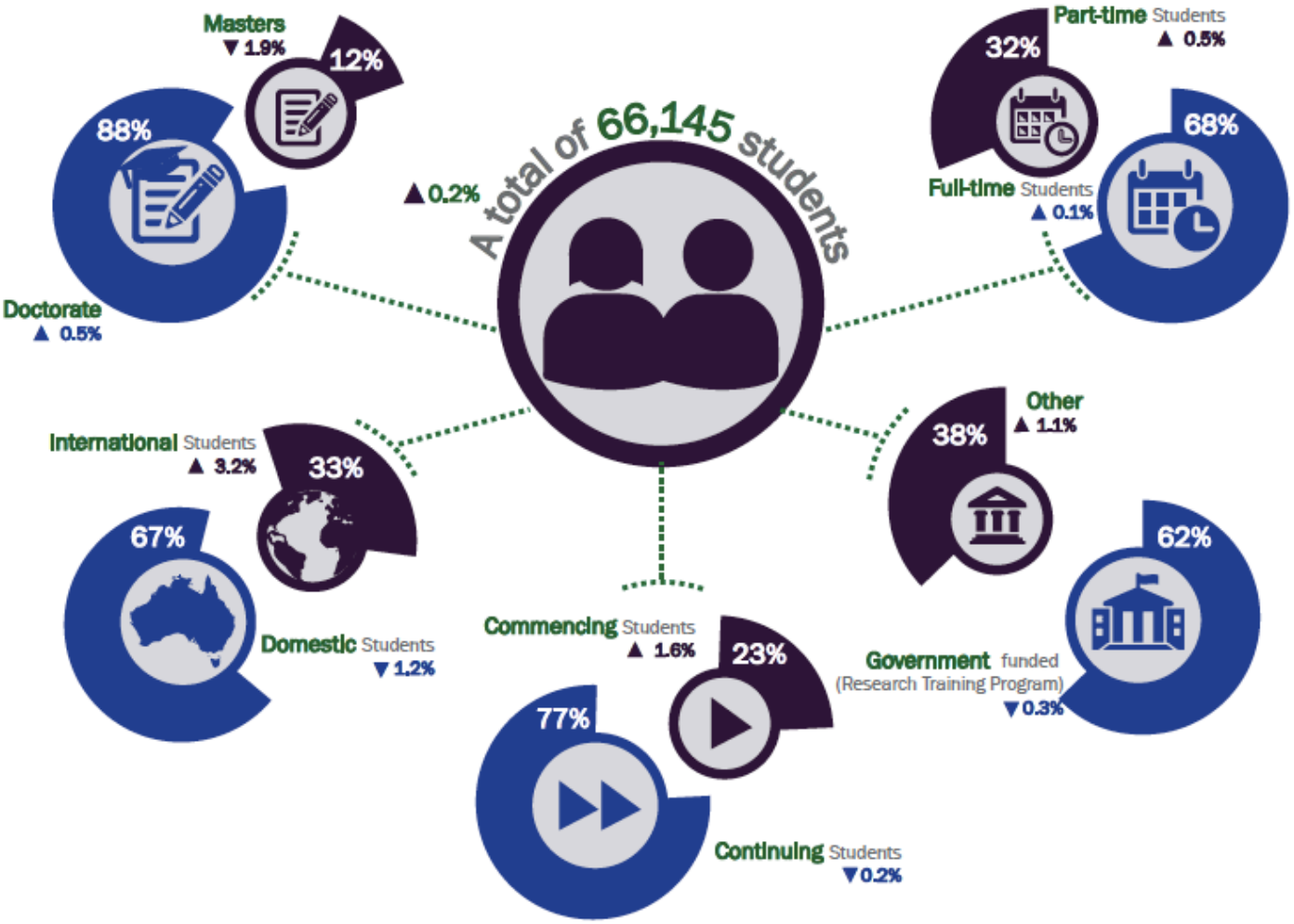
The Changing Landscape of Research Training in Australia

Sue Berners-Price

ACGR Convenor
Dean,
Graduate Research School
Griffith University

2017 HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH STUDENT POPULATION

Comparison data - 2016



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF
GRADUATE RESEARCH

2017 HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH STUDENT POPULATION

Comparison data - 2016

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF
GRADUATE RESEARCH

Student **Equity**

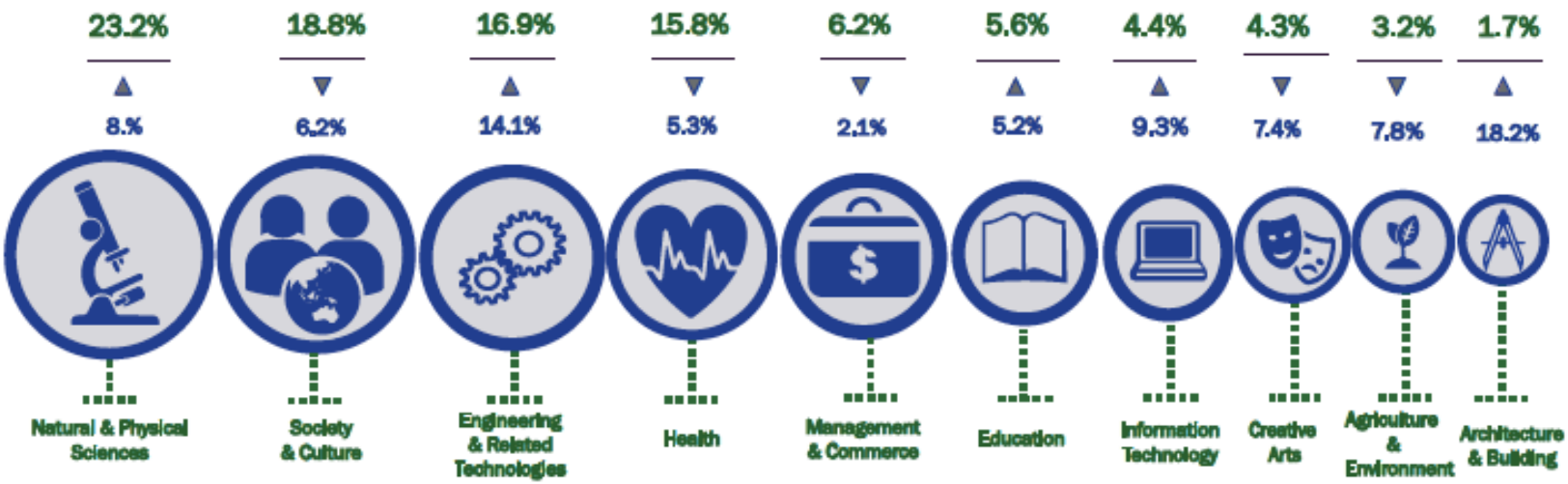
Students from **Low SES backgrounds** comprise **8.8%** of all domestic HDR students.
▲ 1.0%

Aboriginal and **Torres Strait Islander** students comprise **1.4%** of all domestic HDR students.
▲ 11.3%

50.5% of all HDR students are **female.**
▲ 0.1%

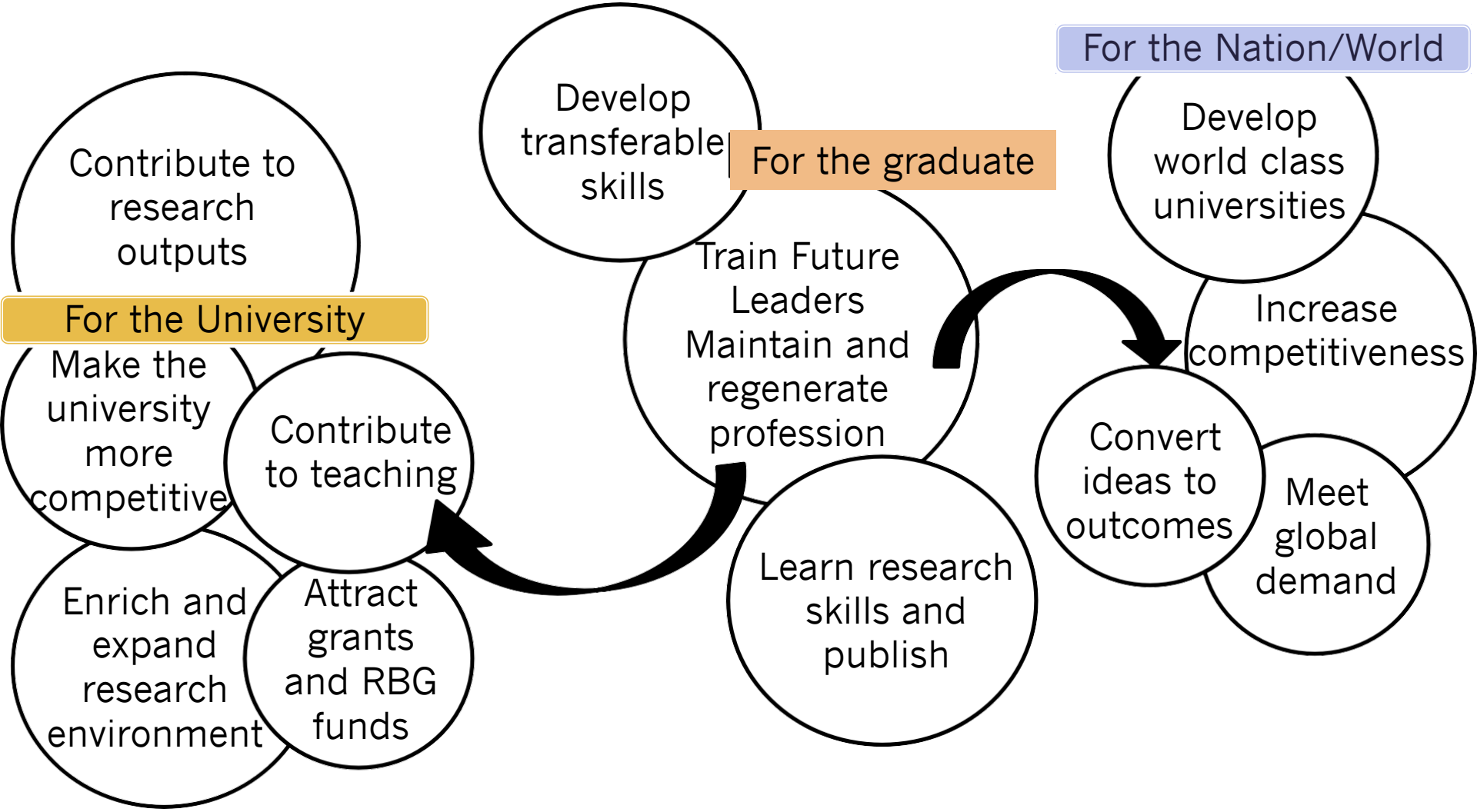
Students in **Regional Areas** comprise **14.3%** of all domestic HDR students.
▼ 0.7%

Commencing Students, by broad fields of education (per cent of all HDR students):



Why do we train PhDs?

Australian Council of Graduate Research



The Australian Context

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

2 (MPhil) or 3-4 (PhD) years, usually no compulsory coursework

Admission	With Honours or Masters and some research experience
Research proposal	Usually at 6 months in
Confirmation	6 months to 1 year
Milestones	Expected progress, annual reports
Thesis submission	Examination based on thesis only, usually no oral with 2 or 3 external examiners
Graduation	

Overview of recent Australian policy, 2007-17

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

Rudd-Gillard-Rudd Labor Governments (2007-2013)

- Ambitious innovation agenda, which saw the policy and administrative splitting of research and education functions of HE, with research and research training framed as industry and innovation functions (2007-2011)
- In excess of 10 inquiries, commissioned reports and policy statements in these years (including major House of Representative Standing Committee inquiry in 2008)
- Framing of research training as production of highly skilled innovation workforce pitched at “industrial transformation”
- Need for greater industry engagement of PhD candidates and graduates
- Very few measures effected to address these directions

Overview of recent Australian policy, 2007-17 (cont'd)

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

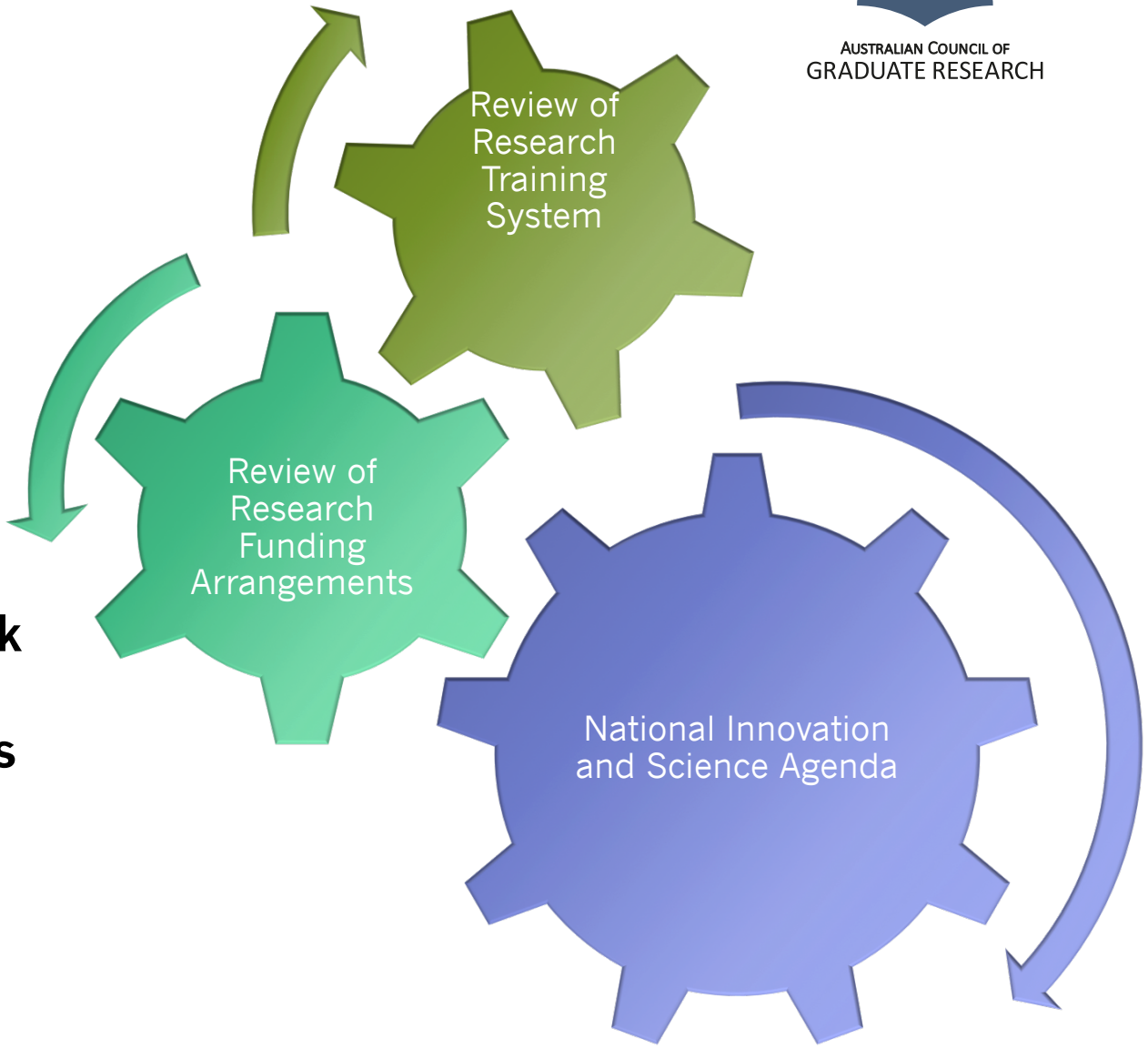
Abbott-Turnbull Liberal Coalition Governments (2013-2017)

Very quiet under Tony Abbott (2013-15), but significant activity under Malcolm Turnbull directed to a revamped innovation agenda:

1. National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA) (2015).
2. Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) review of research training (2015-16).
3. Watt Review of research block grant funding (2016).

2016 – the year in review!

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH



Higher Education Standards Framework 2015 (2017) – HDR specific requirements

ACOLA and Watt Reviews: Australian Government Response

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

1. Changes to Research Block Grant arrangements

- Consolidation of 6 research and research training block grants into two. For research training, the Research Training Scheme (RTS) and two scholarship schemes were consolidated into one block grant, awarded on a performance basis, the Research Training Program (RTP).
- Gives HEPs a degree of discretion as to allocation of funding at the general or program level as distinct from award of scholarships – the numbers of awards to be made being previously specified by government.
- Under RTP the only restriction in place relates to the number of scholarships awarded to international candidates which is limited to no more than 10% of total awards – the total being for each institution to decide.
- RTP maintains the performance element of RTS with a formula driven at 50% by completions.

ACOLA and Watt Reviews: Australian Government Response (cont'd)

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

2. Establishment of National Research Internships Program

- $28.2 million investment over 4 years from 2017. MITAC-styled internship program coordinated by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) (with funding taken from now aggregated RTP pool).

3. Improvements to data reporting

- New higher degree by research indicators for 2018 (including HDR engagement with end users).

Research Training System Review

ACOLA
AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED ACADEMIES

Key findings
1. Enabling candidates to make an informed choice about HDR training
2. Better preparing candidates for HDR training
3. Providing financial support to research training candidates
4. Delivering transferable skills development through HDR training
5. Supporting industry-relevant research projects
6. Enabling industry placements in research training
7. Improving the HDR training system (filling data gaps)
8. International benchmarking of HDR offerings
9. Assessment of both candidate and thesis
10. Evaluation of supervisor competency and performance
11. Under-represented groups in HDR training

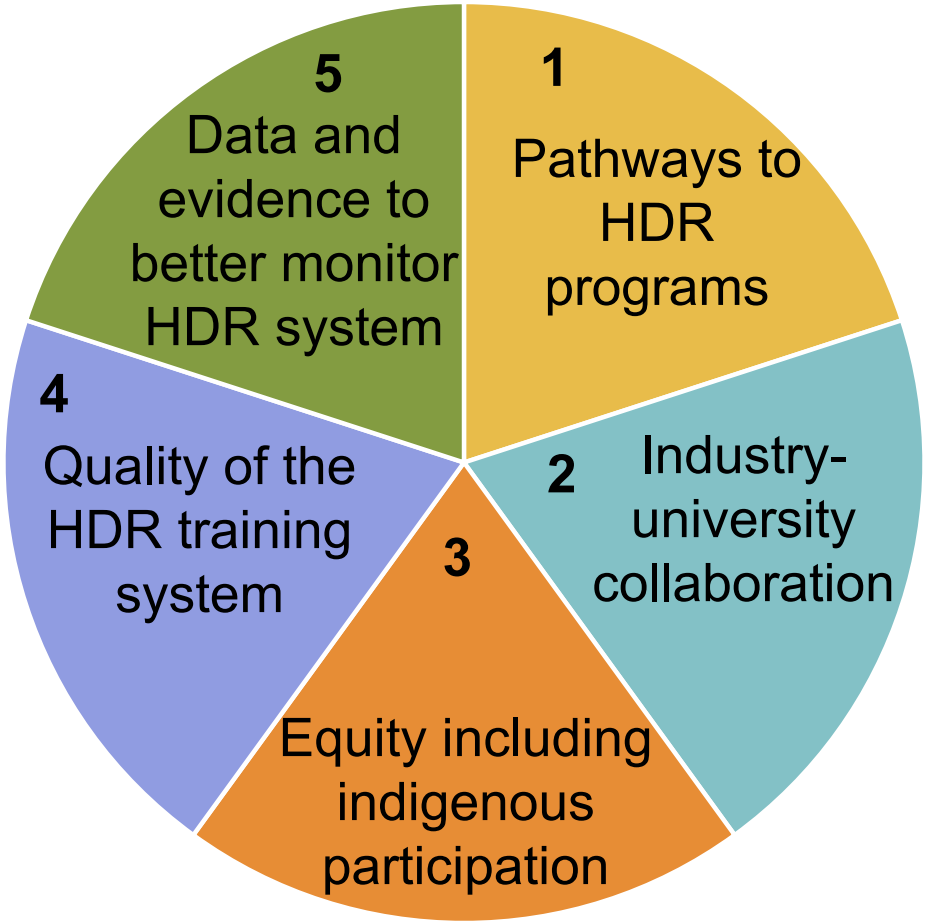
https://acola.org.au/wp/PDF/SAF13/SAF13%20RTS%20report.pdf

Australia's Research Training System: 2016 Review

Australian Council of Graduate Research

Implementation Plan: Priority Issues

Supervisor performance
Skills development
Benchmarking



ACOLA
Australian Council of Learned Academies

https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/research-training-implementation-plan

ACOLA Review – Section 5
Supporting Industry Relevant Research Projects

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF
GRADUATE RESEARCH

Key Finding 5

Australian industry-university collaboration performance lies close to bottom in terms of the international comparators reported by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

But also in the report

Candidates undertaking HDR training come from a range of backgrounds, which is reflected in their age range. Two thirds of candidates are aged over 30, with 27 per cent over the age of 40 as shown in Table 4. A large number of candidates coming to HDR training already possess a wide range of skills and work experience.

ACGR's Industry Engagement Project

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

1. How many current Australian HDR candidates are engaged with industry?
2. What industries are they engaged with?
3. What is the extent of this engagement?
4. What are the broad fields of education by which their research is categorised?
5. What is the impact of this engagement on industry?
6. What are the career trajectories of HDR candidates?

Melbourne-CSHE contracted to undertake research, lead researchers Peter Bentley PhD and Emmaline Bexley PhD

ACGR's Industry Engagement Project: Headline Findings

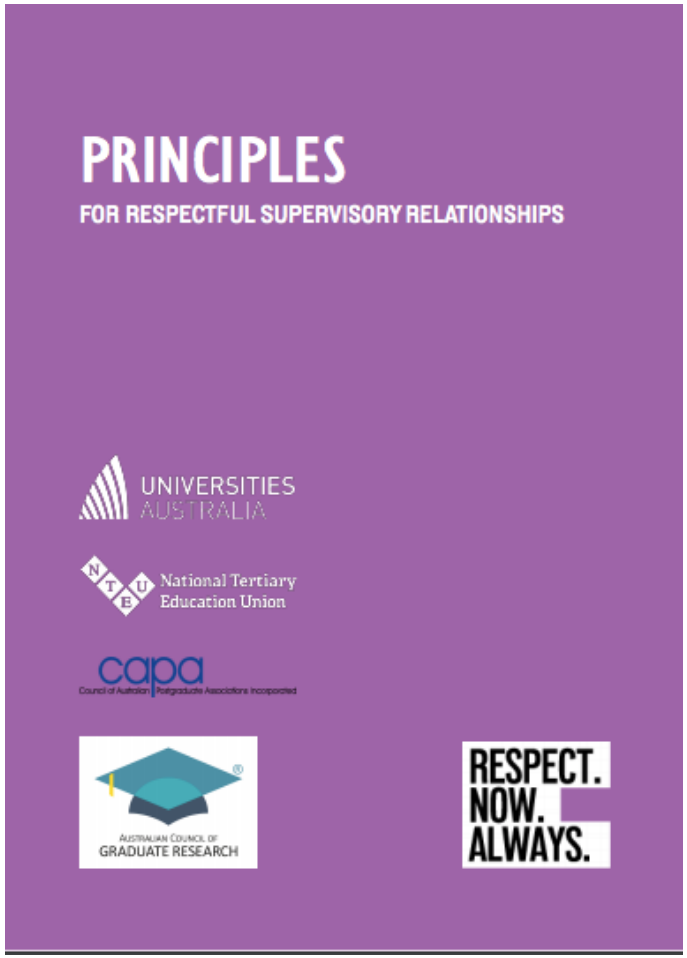
Australian Council of Graduate Research

Across all disciplines, candidates in our survey engaged with non-university organisations in the following ways:

- 21% engaged in research projects;
- 7% in paid/compulsory placements;
- 7% in unpaid placements;
- 18% wrote collaborative papers/dissertations;
- 39% attended lectures/seminars;
- 34% attended meetings/visits;
- 28% collected primary research data from external organisations;
- 20% utilised secondary data from external organisations; and
- 18% received advice on the structure of their PhD.

Respectful Research Training

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF GRADUATE RESEARCH



- A SEXUAL OR ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SUPERVISOR AND THEIR STUDENT IS NEVER APPROPRIATE
- UNIVERSITIES RECOGNISE THERE IS A POWER IMBALANCE IN THE SUPERVISOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP AND THAT THE GREATER POWER RESTS WITH THE SUPERVISOR
- THE PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SUPERVISOR AND THEIR STUDENT IS CHARACTERISED BY MUTUAL RESPECT AND TRUST.
- ETC/…..

Respectful Research Training

- The Australian Council of Graduate Research has developed a suite of video resources and training materials to help combat sexual harassment, gender bias and discrimination in research training programs.
- 42 Higher Education Providers now have access to these resources