

INNOVATIONS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION PROFILE

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Abstract

Premier Rann's transmogrification of Adelaide from Premier Dunstan's 'Athens of the South' to 'the Boston of the South' signals a major social innovation in higher education.

Changes in South Australian legislation and the national regulatory framework over the past twenty years have broken the monopoly of the state universities. A growth in a variety of higher education providers and the Premier's University City Project, which envisages Adelaide as a global centre of education, enhance the public profile of the emerging higher education scenario. SA higher education institutions recruit students from all over the world to their local and overseas campuses, which increases pressure on accreditation authorities.

The quality of institutions and courses is imperative to the ongoing success and growth of the SA higher education export industry. For the purpose of quality assurance of higher education in SA, the Quality Directorate, DFEEST, performs a number of roles. These include, inter alia, providing quality advice and information regarding Australian standards for registration and accreditation of higher education institutions and courses and utilising rigorous quality assurance mechanisms to ensure consumers receive a quality product. The Quality Directorate assists providers with their immediate needs arising in response to changes in the global market.

In this paper we discuss different perspectives on the changing profile of the higher education sector in South Australia; innovations in the regulatory framework locally and nationally in the global context; the Quality Directorate's role in maintaining quality standards of higher education delivery; and quality assurance and consumer protection mechanisms.