GROUP OF EIGHT

Go8 Backgrounder 25

Academic staffing trends in Go8 and other Australian universities, 2000-2010

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Contents

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This paper presents an analysis of trends in actual full-time equivalent (FTE) university staff over 2000-2010 for Go8 and non-Go8 universities. Staff are classified by function as 'Academic' or 'Other'. Academic staff are classified as Research Only (RO) or Teaching and Research (T&R) or Teaching Only (TO).

The evidence shows that the assertions of Professor Frank Larkins are wrong in fact and interpretation.

Professor Larkins published a paper in October 2011 which, regrettably, has been reported without question in the Australian and international media.[1] Larkins asserted that universities have been pursuing their own research interests above all else and students are being short-changed as a consequence. He alleged that universities have been reclassifying academic staff in order to game assessments of research quality. He claimed that "the coursework student to T&R + TO staff ratio was concerningly high at 34:1 in 2010".

The available evidence does not support his claims.

1 Larkins, F. (2011). *Academic Staffing Trends: At what cost to teaching and learning excellence?* Australian Higher Education Research Policy Analysis. L H Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management (www.lhmartininstitute.edu.au).

Key findings

1. The coursework student to teaching staff (T&R + TO staff FTE) ratio in 2010 was 21.7 for Australia's universities in aggregate.

For Go8 universities on average the ratio was 16.8 in 2010. For other universities on average the ratio was 24.4. These ratios have deteriorated since 2000, for both Go8 universities (by 2.7) and other universities (by 5.3). Trend increases in student staff ratios need to be understood in the context of innovations in teaching delivery and student support. Australia's universities are achieving productivity improvements through greater efficiencies in student throughput costs without diminution of graduate output quality on the available measures (e.g. student satisfaction, graduate destinations). Nonetheless, the trend deterioration across the sector in Student Staff Ratios (SSRs) is worrying, although it is no where near as bad as Larkins suggests.

2. Academic staff with a Teaching Only (TO) function have increased as student enrolments have grown

Across Australia's universities, in aggregate, coursework students (EFTSL) expanded from 528 558 in 2000 to 822 126 in 2010, an increase of 293 568 or 56%. As a consequence, FTE Teaching-Only (TO) academic staff have increased as a proportion of all academic staff from 18.4% to 20.5% over the decade to 2010. Universities have increased casual teaching staff to deal efficiently with increased student numbers. There has been no widespread or systematic reclassification of ongoing academic staff positions to T&R or TO functions.

3. Academic staff with a Research Only (RO) function have increased as research funding has grown

Research-Only (RO) staff have increased as external funding for research has increased. Most RO staff appointments are additional to the established academic staff complement of a university, excepting some of those who win nationally-competitive research fellowships and whom are drawn from internal academic ranks.

4. Academic staff with a Teaching and Research (T&R) function have increased but at a lower rate than TO and RO staff

Universities have responded in their staffing decisions to volatile rates of growth in student demand and research funding. They have also accommodated in their staffing structures the underlying trend increase in student participation.

5. The proportion of casual staff rose only modestly over the decade 2000-2010

Actual casual staff FTE as a proportion of all staff FTE rose only modestly over the decade 2000-2010 from 15.2% to 16.2%.

6. Non-academic staff have increased at a slightly higher rate than academic staff

Non-academic staff (professional, administrative, technical and general staff, together classified as 'Other') have increased at a slightly higher rate than academic staff over the decade. The non-academic staff share of all university staff has risen slightly from 52% in 2000 to 52.4% in 2010. Growth in student enrolments has required growth in student support services. Growth in research activity has required growth in research support services. Technological changes have redistributed some functions in ways that increase back-office contributions to teaching delivery and research capability. Outreach and commercial activities of universities and increased regulatory and reporting burdens have also created the need for more administrative staff.

Table 1 shows the overall shifts in the staffing composition of Australia's universities from 2000 to 2010.

Table 1. Change in academic staff FTE, by function and work contract, all Australian universities, 2000-2010

	Full-time & Fractional FT	Casual	Total
Teaching and research	3 696	-91	3 605
Research only	5 640	646	6 286
Teaching only	621	2 967	3 588
All academic staff	9 957	3 522	13 479
Other staff	13 431	2 031	15 462
Total staff	**23 387**	**5 554**	**28 941**

Differences and divergences between Go8 and other universities:

- Go8 universities have around half of their full-time and fractional full-time academic staff with T&R functions, whereas non-Go8 universities have around three quarters.
- Go8 universities have 47% of the academic staff, excluding casuals, with a RO function compared with 20% for other universities.
- In 2010, RO staff almost equalled T&R staff on a FTE basis in Go8 universities, whereas there were more than three times as many FTE T&R staff as RO staff in non-Go8 universities.
- In 2010, the academic to 'other' (non-academic) FTE staff ratio was 1.014 for Go8 universities and 0.841 for other universities
- For Go8 universities, the ratio of FTE academic staff with a teaching function (TO + T&R) to coursework student EFTSL (undergraduate + postgraduate) rose from 14.1 to 16.8 over the decade. For non-Go8 universities that ratio grew even further, from 19.1 to 24.4.
- Go8 universities have ceased employing casuals for T&R positions. Non-Go8 universities have continued to increase their T&R casuals.

Similarities and convergences between Go8 and other universities:

- Casual appointments of FTE staff with a RO function grew at roughly the same number and rate for both Go8 and other universities over the decade to 2010.
- For higher degree research students, in 2010 the Go8 maintained its 2000 ratio of 1:1 of researcher FTE staff (RO + T&R) while non-Go8 universities moved closer to the Go8 SSR over the decade.
- FTE TO staff have risen in both Go8 and other universities broadly by 50% over the decade.

Introduction

In October 2011, Professor Frank Larkins published a paper with the L H Martin Institute on trends in academic staffing of Australian universities over the decade 2000 to 2010. Larkins suggested that universities were relegating teaching in the pursuit of research prestige. The Go8 was interested to see the extent to which the shifts observed by Larkins varied among research-intensive and other universities. However, in reviewing Larkins' work it became apparent that some of his observations were based on comparisons of unlike data. In particular, Professor Larkins used a mix of actual data and data estimates, and he preferenced head counts over full-time equivalents (FTE), even when actual casual staff data are only reported on a FTE basis. Professor Larkins also interpreted his observed trends with reference to developments in research policy, notably the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative and its predecessor Research Quality Framework (RQF) but neglected to consider the concurrent shift to a demand-driven funding model in higher education policy.

Definitions

University staff are classified by work contract as Full-Time, Fractional Full-Time or Actual Casual, and by function as academic or other (non-academic). Academic staff are sub-classified by function as Teaching Only (TO), Research Only (RO), or Teaching & Research (T&R). Both TO and T&R staff may teach undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students. Both RO and T&R staff may supervise students undertaking higher degrees by research.

Other staff are staff in functions other than teaching or research. Other staff may include professional, administrative, technical staff and general staff. Some staff performing such functions may themselves be highly qualified academically. There is some variability among universities in the assignment of staff to functions. Research assistants, for instance, may be classified as academic staff or other staff.

The changing Australian university staff profile

The data in Table 2 include all actual full-time, fractional full-time and casual staff on a full-time equivalent basis (FTE). Table 2 shows that 'other' staff have increased at a slightly higher rate than academic staff over the decade. The non-academic staff share of all university staff has risen from 52% in 2000 to 52.4% in 2010.

Table 2. Staff profile by broad function, all universities, 2000 and 2010 (FTE)

	2000	2010	Increase 2000-2010	
Academic	39 376	52 855	13 479	34.2%
Other	42 613	58 075	15 462	36.3%
All staff	81 988	110 929	28 941	35.3%

Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics, 2000 and 2010

Several explanations may be suggested for this general growth in the number and proportion of 'other' staff. One factor is the growth in student services associated with growth in student numbers. Another factor is growth in the research function itself, and associated increases in laboratory assistants and workshop technicians. Another factor is the growth of commercial functions of universities alongside other funds-raising activities, and the professionalisation of various administrative services such as advancement and marketing. Another factor is growth in back-office staff involved with the increasingly sophisticated and widespread use of information and communications technology in teaching and research. Additionally, growth in 'other' staff arises from the increasing administrative workloads of universities, including those derived from government regulatory and reporting burdens. These workload increases also affect the time at task of academic staff. There is no hard data available to support the relative influence of these various factors.

An important implication of the lack of understanding of changes in the ratio of teaching staff to 'other' staff is the difficulty of providing meaningful student/staff ratios for the purpose of indicating a university's total commitment to teaching. We do not know the proportion of 'other' staff dedicated to teaching support (e.g. preparation and presentation of teaching and learning materials), learning support (e.g. study assistance) and student support (e.g. financial, legal, accommodation and other non-educational assistance). Data collection in this domain on a consistent basis is complicated by the fact that different universities approach the provision of these services in varying ways.

Table 3 shows that academic staff with a research-only (RO) appointment have experienced the largest growth of all academic staff over the decade to 2010.

Table 3. Academic staff profile by appointment, all universities, 2000 and 2010 (FTE)

	2000	2010	Increase 2000-2010	
Teaching and research	23 469	27 074	3 605	15.4%
Research only	8 651	14 937	6 286	72.7%
Teaching only	7 256	10 844	3 588	49.4%
Total academic staff	39 376	52 855	13 479	34.2%

Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics, 2000 and 2010

As shown in Figure 1, RO staff have increased their representation among academic staff from 22% in 2000 to 28.3%. Several factors may be suggested to explain this growth in RO appointments. The major factor is simply the growth in funding for research. Between 2000 and 2009, the HERDC-reported research income of universities rose in nominal prices from $1 053.3 billion to $2 780.1 billion – a rise of $1.7 billion or 155%. Commonwealth competitive research grants by themselves rose from $0.459 Billion to $ 1.174 billion. The additional research income necessarily requires greater research capacity, including more researchers and research assistants. Go8 research income grew from $0.702 billion in 2000 to $2.117 billion in 2010 – a rise of $1.4 billion or over 200%. As the Go8 gained a rising share of a growing pool of funds for research, capturing 82% of the additional funding, it can be expected that they should have grown RO staff at a higher rate than for non-Go8 universities. Additionally growth in the number of students undertaking higher degrees by research may be a driver of growth in RO academic staff appointments. These matters are explored below.

Another explanatory factor may be the increasing complexity of research problems and the need for greater concentration of effort on them. Another factor is the emergence of research quality assessments and their use in funding formulae. In most cases, research performance is measured not only by the quality of research but also by the volume of quality research. Research output is normally expected to increase when academic staff are able to devote more time to research. A related factor is the rise in world rankings of universities, most of which give weightings for research performance, and their signalling role to prospective students and benefactors. An underlying factor is the potency of the university culture that assigns prestige to research. This cultural factor may be reinforced by the strategies of university executives to raise the research profile of their university, and the growth in externally-funded fellowships for academic staff to be 'relieved' of their teaching 'load'. Indeed, the offer of RO appointments may be a mechanism for attracting and retaining academic talent in the increasingly competitive environment, even though it may not align with the *raison d'être* of a university.

Figure 1. FTE Academic staff by function, all universities, 2000 and 2010 (%)

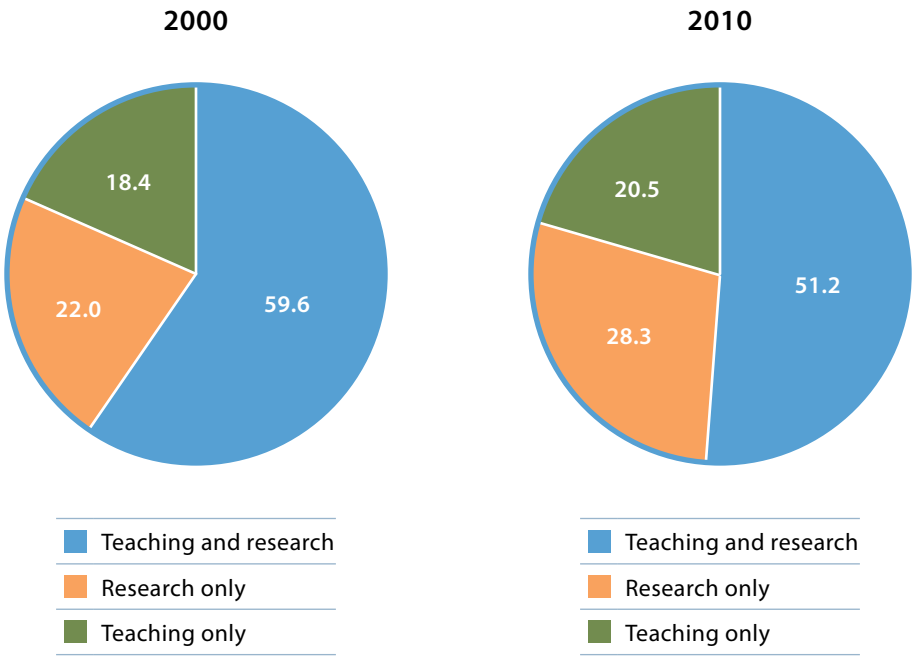


Table 3 and Figure 1 also show a substantial increase in academic staff with teaching-only (TO) appointments. While Table 3 shows the share of TO academic staff rising from 18.4% to 20.5% over the decade to 2010, the ratio of TO appointments to T&R appointments – TO staff as a proportion of all teaching staff – has risen from 23.6% in 2000 to 28.6% in 2010. Frank Larkins has suggested that this rise "is clear evidence that some universities have been reclassifying staff that were previously T&R staff as TO staff in response to the aborted Research Quality Framework (RQF) exercise and the introduction of the ERA exercise" (Larkins, 2011). That may be so. There have been media reports of some universities adopting staff performance management, including the use of research performance indicators for staff remuneration and classification. However, re-classifications have tended to date to be at the margin. The sheer scale of the increase in research funding drives growth in RO staff including researchers, fellows, post-Docs and research assistants. Importantly, T&R staff numbers have continued to increase and the growth in TO staff correlates with steep rises in student intakes post 2008. As the per-student funding rate has not risen commensurately, the rise of TO staff may be understood as an efficient means for universities to respond to changes in student demand.

Between 2000 and 2010, the rise in student enrolments, on a full-time equivalent basis, has been 303 696 or 54%, from 557 763 in 2000 to 861 459 in 2010. Over the same period, the teaching-related revenues of universities have grown from $6 254.1 billion to $12 999.5 billion (DEEWR, *Finance 2000 & 2010*)[2]. In nominal prices, the apparent gross per EFTSL funding rate has moved from $11 213 in 2000 to $15 090 in 2010. In constant 2010 prices, using the CPI as a deflator, average per student funding has been flat, barely shifting from $15 095 in 2000. However, over the same period university costs have risen above the general rate of inflation such as for staff salaries, power, communications and consumables.

Table 4 shows increases of casual appointments in both academic and general staff functions.

Table 4. Casual staff (FTE) by function, all universities, 2000 and 2010

	2000	2010	Increase 2000-2010	
Academic	7 522	11 044	3 522	47%
Other	4 904	6 935	2 031	41%
All casual staff	12 425	17 979	5 554	45%

Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics, 2000 and 2010

Contrary to the popular perception, actual casual staff FTE as a proportion of all staff FTE rose only modestly over the decade 2000-2010 from 15.2% to 16.2%. In 2010, casual staff represented 20.9% of academic staff FTE and 11.9% of general staff FTE. The strong influence of industrial unions may account for such a relatively low level of university staffing flexibility in times of intensifying competition.

Table 5 shows that, in absolute terms, the largest rise in academic casual staff has been in the TO function. In 2010, 85% of all academic casual staff had TO appointments. In 2000, casual TO staff represented 88.4% of all TO staff.

2 The revenue items selected for this analysis include: Commonwealth Grant Scheme and Other Grants; HECS-HELP Australian Government Payments; FEE-HELP Australian Government Payments; Upfront Student Contributions; Fees from Fee Paying Overseas Students; Fees from Fee Paying Non-Overseas Postgraduate Students; and Fees from Fee Paying Non-Overseas Undergraduate Students.

Table 5. Academic casual staff (FTE) by function, all universities, 2000 and 2010

	2000	2010	Increase 2000-2010	
Teaching and research	325	234	-91	-28%
Research only	785	1 431	646	82%
Teaching only	6 412	9 379	2 967	46%

(Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics, 2000 and 2010)

Of interest is the relatively substantial rise in RO casuals. As seen in Table 5, casual RO staff FTE almost doubled over the decade. Several factors might explain this rise. The major factor is the growth of researchers and research assistants dependent on short-term project funding through competitive research grants. As noted earlier, the amount of research funding has risen substantially. This rise attracts more applications. Facing pressure to sustain success rates at around 22%, the research funding councils tend to reduce project grant levels to support a wider spread of projects. The growth in RO casuals may be a product of the greater competition and the associated uncertainty of funding for the greater number of short-term research projects.

Similarities and differences between Go8 and other universities

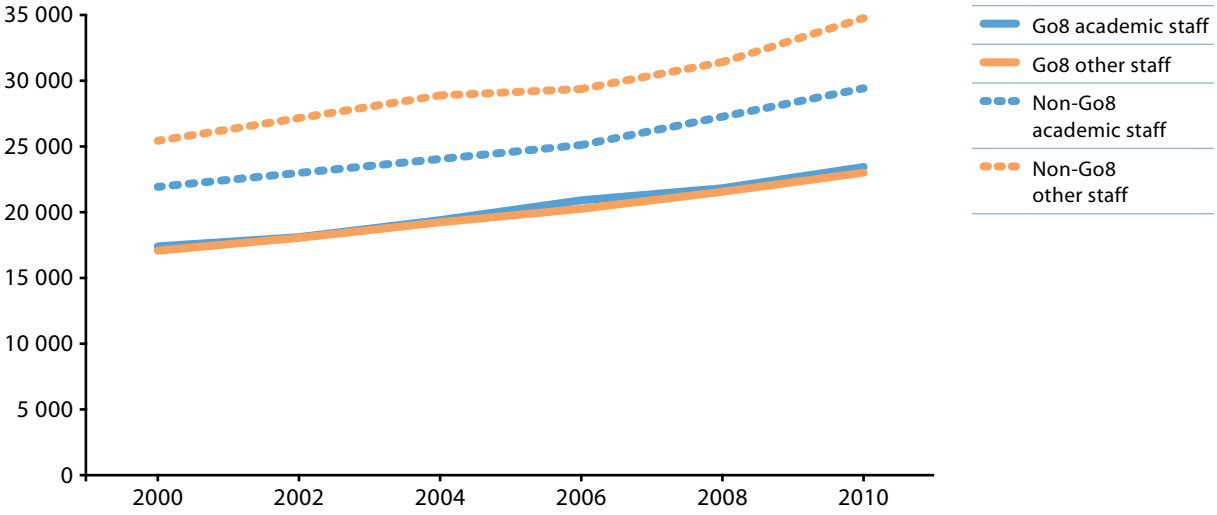
This section explores the extent to which staffing trends differ among Go8 and other universities.

Table 6. Full-Time, Fractional Full-Time and Actual Casual Staff FTE by function, 2000 and 2010

University group	Staff FTE	2000	2010	Increase 2000-10	
				FTE	%
Go8	Academic staff	17 457	23 464	6 007	34.4%
	Other staff	17 156	23 146	5 990	34.9%
Non-Go8	Academic staff	21 919	29 391	7 472	34.1%
	Other staff	25 457	34 929	9 472	37.2%

Table 6 shows that the greatest growth has been in non-academic staff at non-Go8 universities. In contrast, the Go8 universities have had a more balanced growth in staff FTE in academic and other functions. In 2010, the academic to 'other' (non-academic) FTE staff ratio was 1.014 for Go8 universities and 0.841 for other universities (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. FTE for full-time, fractional full-time and actual casual staff, academic and other functions, Go8 and non-Go8 universities



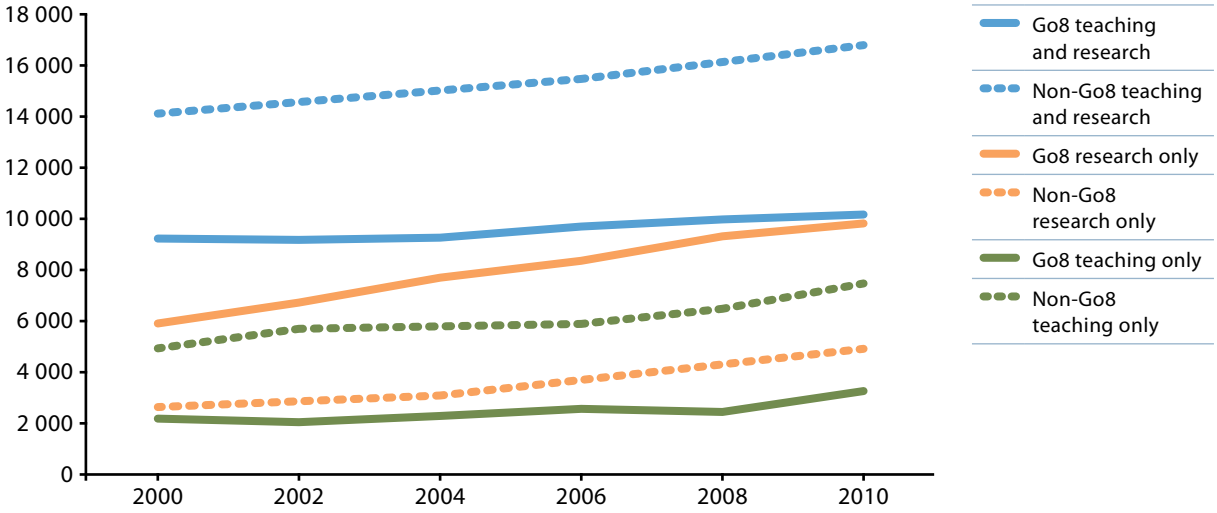
Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics

Table 7 shows that by far the greatest absolute growth in academic staff has been RO staff in Go8 universities. In 2010, RO staff almost equalled T&R staff on a FTE basis in Go8 universities, whereas there were more than three times as many FTE T&R staff as RO staff in non-Go8 universities. TO staff have risen in both Go8 and other universities, broadly by 50% over the decade (see Figure 3).

Table 7. Full-Time, Fractional Full-Time and Actual Casual Staff FTE by function, 2000 and 2010

University group	Staff FTE	2000	2010	Increase 2000-10	
				FTE	%
Go8	Teaching and research	9,272	10,199	927	10.0%
	Research only	5,936	9,937	4,001	67.4%
	Teaching only	2,249	3,328	1,079	48.0%
Non-Go8	Teaching and research	14,197	16,875	2,678	18.9%
	Research only	2,715	5,000	2,285	84.2%
	Teaching only	5,007	7,516	2,509	50.1%

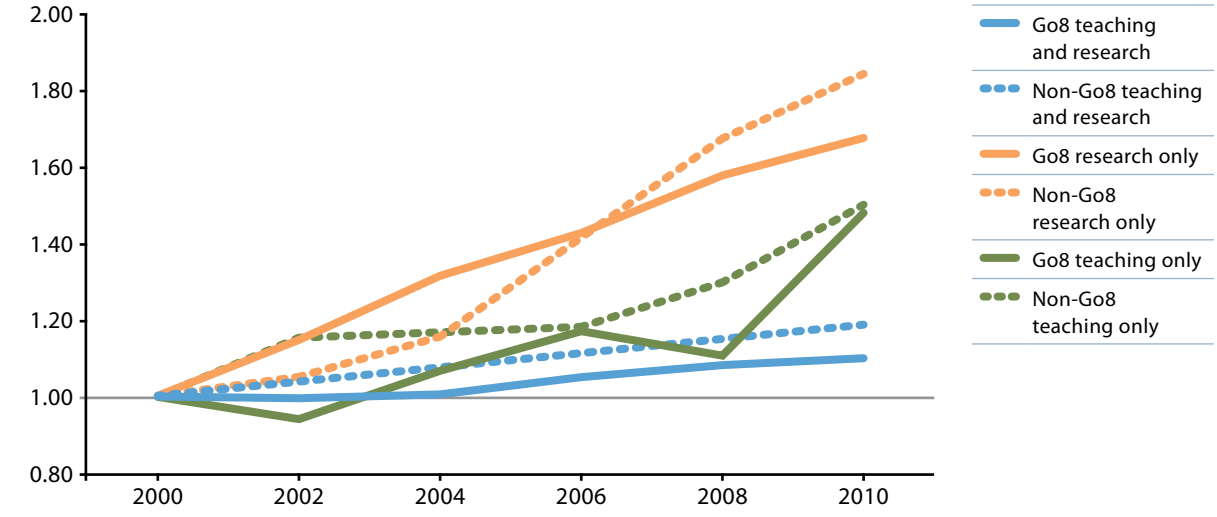
Figure 3. Full-time, fractional full-time and actual casual academic staff, FTE, by function



Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics

However, RO staff FTE in non-Go8 universities have grown at a relatively faster rate (84.2%) than for RO staff in Go8 universities and for the other academic functions in both Go8 and non-Go8 universities (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Trend in FTE for full-time, fractional full-time and actual casual academic staff by function



Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics

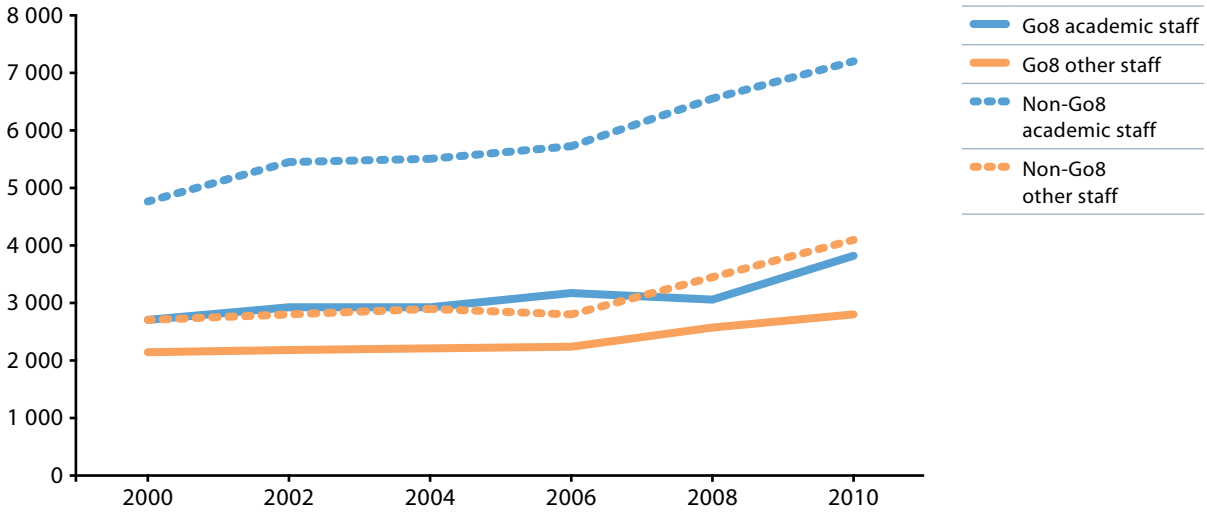
The employment of casuals varies between Go8 and other universities (and may well do so also within each group). Table 8 shows the distribution of casuals across academic and other staff appointments.

Table 8. Actual Casual Staff (FTE) by function and classification, Go8 and other universities

University group	Staff FTE	2000	2010	Increase 2000-10	
				FTE	%
Go8	Teaching and research	204	0	-204	-100.0%
	Research only	410	747	337	82.2%
	Teaching only	2,097	3,080	983	46.9%
	Academic staff	2,711	3,827	1,116	41.2%
	Other staff	2,176	2,805	629	28.9%
	Total staff	4,891	6,636	1,745	35.7%
Non-Go8	Teaching and research	121	234	113	93.4%
	Research only	375	684	309	82.4%
	Teaching only	4,315	6,299	1,984	46.0%
	Academic staff	4,811	7,217	2,406	50.0%
	Other staff	2,728	4,130	1,402	51.4%
	Total staff	7,534	11,343	3,809	50.6%

As shown in Figure 5, non-Go8 universities have more casuals in non-academic functions than Go8 universities. However, in 2010, 42% of casual staff in Go8 universities were employed in non-academic functions, compared with 36% in non-Go8 universities.

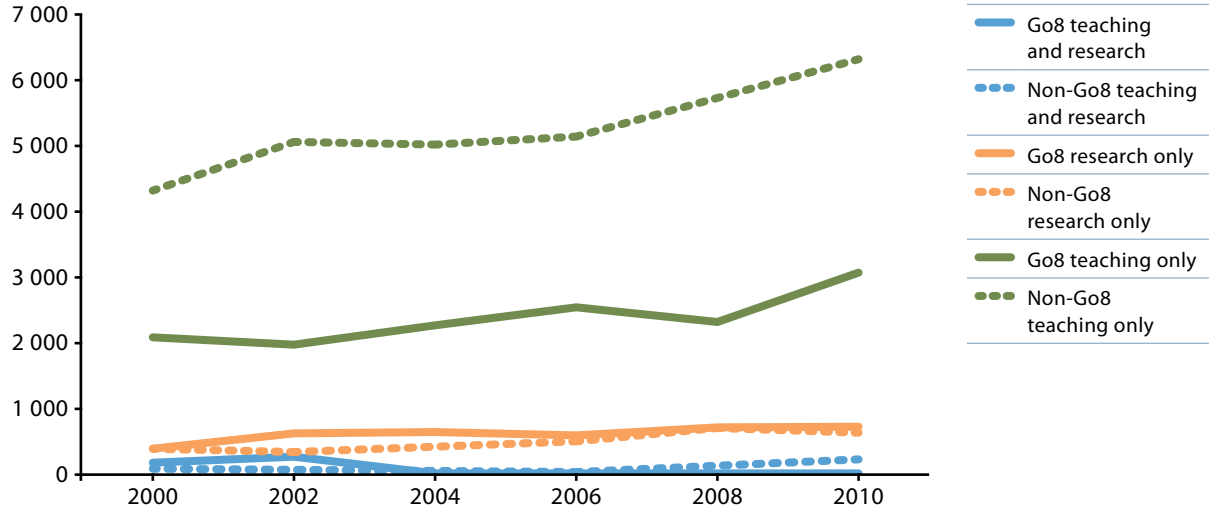
Figure 5. Actual casual academic staff FTE by function, Go8 and other universities, 2000-2010



Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics

This higher non-academic usage rate in Go8 universities reflects the cessation of casual employment for T&R positions (see Table 7 and Figure 6). In contrast, non-Go8 universities have continued to increase their T&R casuals. Casual RO FTE grew at roughly the same number and rate for both Go8 and other universities over the decade to 2010.

Figure 6. Actual casual academic staff FTE by function, Go8 and other universities, 2000 and 2010



Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics

Table 9 excludes casuals. It reveals basic structural change in the composition of the ongoing staffing of universities. The greatest growth over the decade to 2010, both in absolute and relative terms, has been in RO staff in Go8 universities. The next largest absolute growth has been in T&R staff in non-Go8 universities. However, the second and third greatest increases in relative terms have been in RO and TO appointments in non-Go8 universities.

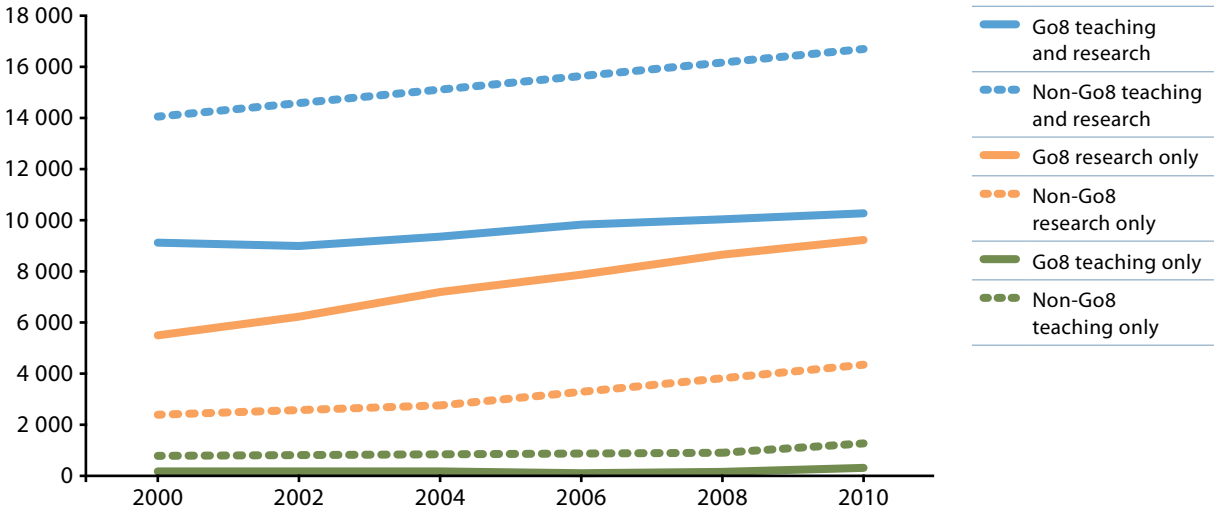
Table 9. Full-time & fractional full-time academic staff FTE, Go8 and other universities, 2000 and 2010

University group	Staff FTE	2000	2010	Increase 2000-10	
				FTE	%
Go8	Teaching and research	9 068	10 199	1 131	12.5%
	Research Only	5 526	9 190	3 664	66.3%
	Teaching Only	152	248	96	63.2%
Non-Go8	Teaching and research	14 076	16 641	2 565	18.2%
	Research Only	2 340	4 316	1 976	84.4%
	Teaching Only	692	1 217	525	75.9%

(Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics, 2000 and 2010)

Figure 7 shows trends in full-time and part-time academic staff FTE of Go8 and other universities over the decade to 2010. In absolute terms, the largest growth has been in Go8 RO appointments, followed by T&R staff in non-Go8 universities. Significant growth also occurred in RO staff in non-Go8 universities. Excluding casuals, the growth in RO and TO staff has led to a declining share for T&R staff, from 61.5% to 51.9% for Go8 universities and from 82.3% to 75% for other universities over the period. This trend suggests greater functional specialisation of academic staff and increasing differentiation within the university sector. Broadly, Go8 universities have around half of their full-time and fractional full-time academic staff appointed on a T&R basis, whereas non-Go8 universities have around three quarters. Go8 universities have 47% of the academic staff, excluding casuals, with a RO function compared with 20% for other universities.

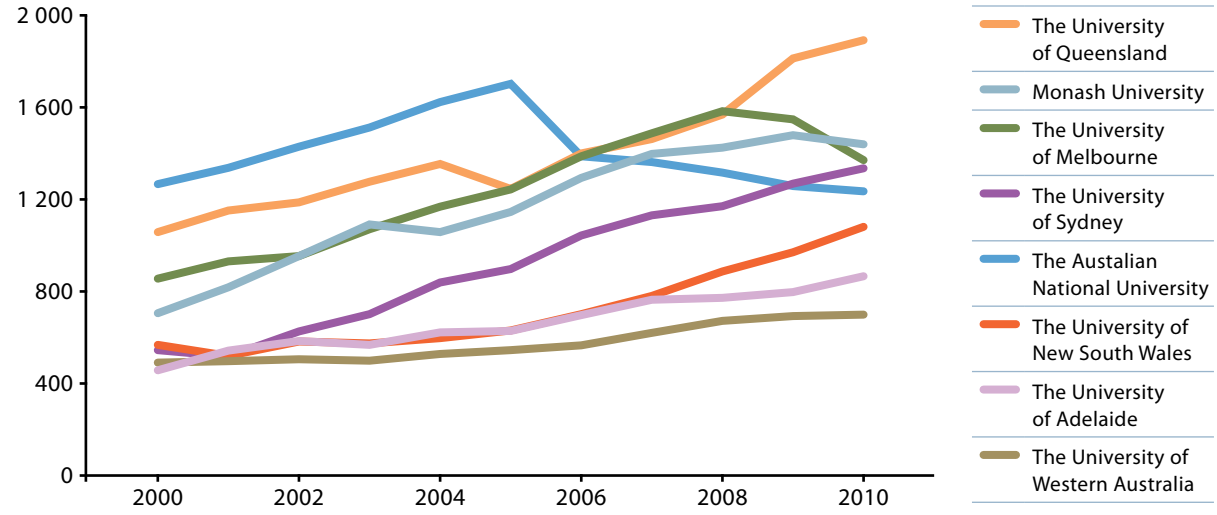
Figure 7. Full-time and fractional full-time academic staff FTE by function, Go8 and non-Go8 universities, 2000-2010



Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics

As Figure 8 shows, there have been differences within the Go8 in terms of growth in academic staff FTE with a RO function. In relative terms, the ANU has remained as the university with the highest proportion of RO staff but that proportion has declined from 71.0% in 2000 to 62.2% in 2010. The decline in the absolute number of RO FTE at ANU after 2005 may be explained by its reduced winnings from national competitive grants following its large gains in 2002, 2003 and 2004 upon entry of the Institute of Advanced Studies to the competitive schemes. In absolute terms the University of Queensland has broken ahead with the largest number of RO staff FTE. The evident lumpiness in the RO trends reflects the attachment of some RO staff to particular research project grants. The fall in RO staff FTE at the University of Melbourne may reflect a reclassification of some research support staff from academic to 'other' function in 2008 and 2009.

Figure 8. Full-time, Fractional Full-time and Actual Casual Staff FTE with a Research Only function, Go8 universities, 2000-2010



Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics

Students in the mix

Undergraduate and postgraduate coursework EFTSL grew by 40% in Go8 universities and by 62% in other universities over 2000-2010. As Table 10 shows, research higher degree enrolments grew faster in non-Go8 universities than in the Go8. In 2010, there were almost as many research students in non-Go8 universities as in the research-intensive Go8, even though the bulk of funding for research has been won by the Go8. Of interest in terms of quality is the intensity of academic staff support for coursework and research students.

Table 10. Students (EFTSL) by level of course enrolment, Go8 and other universities, 2000 and 2010

University group	EFTSL	2000	2010	Increase 2000-10	
				EFTSL	%
Go8	Coursework students	162,506	227,556	65,050	40.0%
	Research students	15,123	20,116	4,993	33.0%
Non-Go8	Coursework students	366,052	594,570	228,518	62.4%
	Research students	14,082	19,217	5,135	36.5%

Table 11 shows academic staff FTE with teaching (TO + T&R) and research (RO + T&R) for Go8 and other universities in 2000 and 2010. In 2010, the proportion of teaching staff in Go8 universities was 57.7%, down from 66% in 2000. The proportion of academic staff with a research function also fell from 87% in 2000 to 86% in 2010. In other universities the proportion of teaching staff also fell from 88% in 2000 to 83% in 2010, as did the proportion of staff with a research function, from 77% to 74%. These proportional declines reflect the fact that growth in T&R staff has been lower than growth in RO and TO staff.

Table 11. Full-time, Fractional Full-time and Actual Casual Academic Staff (FTE)

University group	Academic Staff by classification	2000	2010	2000 (%)	2010 (%)
Go8	T&R+TO	11,521	13,527	66.0%	57.7%
	T&R+RO	15,208	20,136	87.1%	85.8%
	All Academic staff	17,457	23,464		
Non-Go8	T&R+TO	19,204	24,391	87.6%	83.0%
	T&R+RO	16,912	21,875	77.2%	74.4%
	All Academic staff	21,919	29,391		

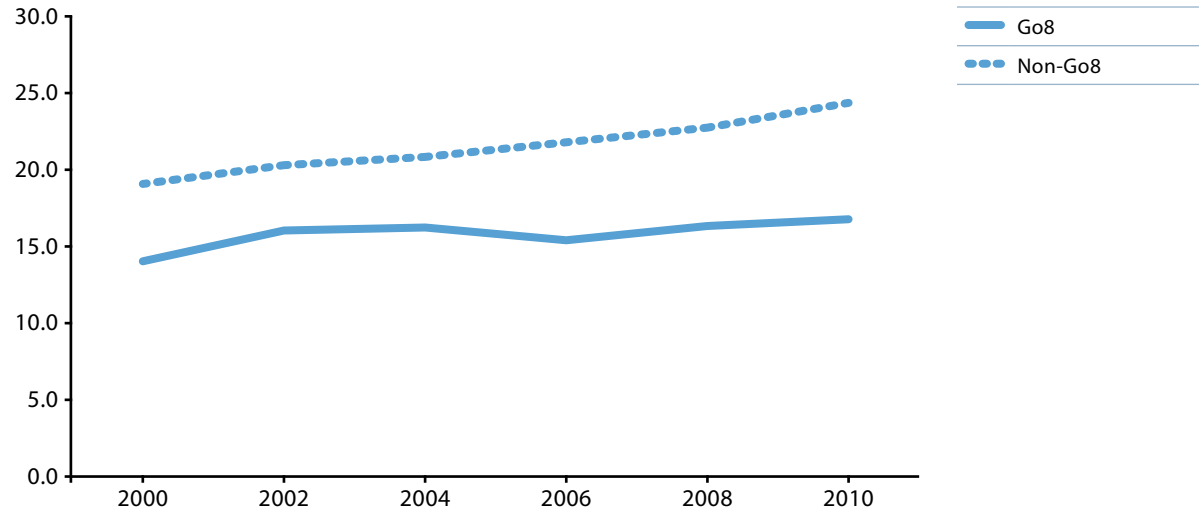
Table 12 computes student staff ratios (SSRs) for coursework students based on academic staff FTE with a teaching function, for Go8 and other universities in 2000 and 2010. For Go8 universities, that ratio rose from 14.1 to 16.8 over the decade. For non-Go8 universities that ratio grew even further, from 19.1 to 24.4. For research students, the Go8 maintained a SSR ratio of 1:1 while non-Go8 universities moved closer to the Go8 SSR over the decade.

Table 12. Apparent Student Staff Ratios (coursework students EFTSL per T&R + TO staff FTE including casuals; and research students per T&R + RO staff FTE including casuals), Go8 and non-Go8 universities, 2000 and 2010

University group	Apparent student staff ratio	2000	2010	Change 2000-10
Go8	Coursework students per T&R + TO staff FTE	14.1	16.8	+2.7
	Research students per T&R + RO staff FTE	1.0	1.0	0.0
Non-Go8	Coursework students per T&R + TO staff FTE	19.1	24.4	+5.3
	Research students per T&R + RO staff FTE	0.8	0.9	+0.1

There has been a narrowing of the gap between the Go8 and non-Go8 universities' ratios of research students to research staff (T&R + RO). Concurrently, the relative increase over the decade in the coursework per student staff ratio for the Go8 of 19% is much lower than that for the non-Go8 universities of 28% (see Figure 9). In absolute terms, the gap between the Go8 and non-Go8 SSRs for coursework students has widened over the decade, from 5.0 in 2000 to 7.6 in 2010.

Figure 9. Student staff ratios: Coursework student EFTSL/Teaching & Research and Teaching Only staff FTE (including casuals)



Source: DEEWR, Selected Higher Education Student and Staff Statistics

Given the intensifying reputational stakes for universities in the global competitive environment, there are necessarily trade-offs to be determined in university staffing affecting the quality of higher education. Nevertheless, it is not evident, at least for Go8 universities, that the quality of the educational environment for coursework or research students has been eroding. It may be argued that the substantial growth in research capacity has enhanced the learning environment. However, much depends on the culture of commitment to students, technological innovation and other factors beyond the scope of this analysis.

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