

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
 Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio  
 Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12  
 15 February 2012

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**AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

**TOPIC:** Demand Driven Higher Education – Fulltime academics and replacement of retiring cohort

**REFERENCE:** Written Question – Senator Rhiannon

**QUESTION No.:** AI-180

How many fulltime higher education academics are currently in the sector and what is the age proportion of those academics, and in what areas of study are they?  
 What strategies does the government have planned to ensure that retiring cohort will be replaced by experienced and qualified academics?

**ANSWER**

According to the most recent data, there were 24,429 fulltime higher education academics in the sector in 2010. Table 1 shows the age distribution of full-time higher education academics and their distribution across Academic Organisational Units.

**Table 1: Age Distribution of Full-time Academics by Academic Organisational Unit**

Academic Organisational Unit	Full-Time Academic Staff						Total
	Less than 35	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 and above	
Natural and Physical Sciences	372	968	1,297	770	96	-	3,504
Information Technology	111	267	359	200	12	-	948
Engineering and Related Technologies	204	508	647	406	57	1	1,822
Architecture and Building	58	169	169	100	13	-	509
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	43	124	193	112	13	-	485
Health	382	848	1,407	846	97	2	3,581
Education	82	310	650	649	67	-	1,758
Management and Commerce	474	869	1,224	904	81	-	3,552
Society and Culture	586	1,389	1,842	1,342	139	6	5,305
Creative Arts	114	381	615	503	44	-	1,657
Mixed Field Programmes	1	-	2	-	-	-	3
No AOU Group Allocated	134	308	500	329	34	1	1,305
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,559</b>	<b>6,140</b>	<b>8,905</b>	<b>6,162</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24,429</b>
<i>% Distribution</i>	10.5%	25.1%	36.5%	25.2%	2.7%	0.0%	100.0%

The Australian Government has demonstrated its support for expansion of the higher education sector providing \$35.7 billion for teaching and learning in universities over the next four years. Initiatives including an increased rate of indexation, performance funding and funding to support low socioeconomic students will put universities in a strong position to invest in their academic workforce.

The Australian Government has commissioned research into the academic workforce leading to the publication of two reports, *The Australian Academic Profession in Transition*, published by the Centre for Study of Higher Education and, *Regenerating the Academic Workforce: The careers, intentions and motivations of higher degree research students in Australia*, published on the Department's website. These reports will assist universities to better understand the concerns and needs of their academic workforce. Universities as autonomous, independent institutions are of course responsible for managing their workforce needs and strategies.

This research found that the vast majority of research students, 83 per cent, have at some time seriously considered an academic career and 54 per cent intend to pursue such work in the medium to long term. In addition, in comparison to other career options, an academic career is viewed favourably on a number of key factors such as the development of new knowledge interest and challenge and job satisfaction. Further, compared with mid and late career academics, early career academics are much more likely to indicate that they have a good work/life balance; less likely to find their work stressful; more likely to be generally satisfied with their work and more likely to find their work rewarding.

The Australian Government has published "Research Skills for an Innovative Future – A Research Workforce Strategy to Cover the Decade to 2020 and Beyond" in 2011. This strategy incorporates seven aspirations, targeting key factors influencing the nation's ability to meet immediate challenges of those of the decade ahead. They are closely aligned with and will directly support the Government's seven Powering Ideas innovation priorities, including in particular priority two: Australia has a strong base of skilled researchers to support the national research effort in both the public and private sectors. Detail on the implementation of this strategy is available at [www.innovation.gov.au/research/researchworkforceissues](http://www.innovation.gov.au/research/researchworkforceissues).