



Centre for Research in  
Assessment and Digital Learning

9 September 2020

Dear ARC,

**Re: Higher education as a site of impact and engagement**

***Submission by Professors David Boud and Margaret Bearman, Associate Professors Phillip Dawson and Rola Ajjawi, Drs Joanna Tai, Trina Jorre de St Jorre and Helen Walker.***

***Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE), Deakin University***

Notions of engagement and impact are appropriate to understand and gauge how research outcomes extend beyond academia, to Australian and international communities. In short, the focus is on how research can contribute to the improvement of society rather than engagement and impact within universities.

However, there is FoR subcode that should be treated differently: **130103 higher education** (to be 390303). Universities serve several functions within Australian society, one of which is higher education. Research that influences higher education practices both national and international should be recognized as impactful and engaging since it affects the society in which we all live and reaches beyond the research community.

Research on higher education influences teaching, learning and the management of higher education. This research prompts changes in the conduct of courses, pedagogy and curriculum, assessment, the development of educational standards, the professional development of teachers, management and administration. In this sense it is no different from educational research's influence on the conduct of education in schools or early childhood settings or workplaces, all of which is recognized by ERA. From an economic perspective, research improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the higher education sector, and thus is a significant contributor to economic growth. For any other industry, these would be counted as legitimate ERA impacts and be allowed for in impact submissions. It is illogical to exclude them for higher education.

This is not to say all impacts on academia should be included. An explicit statement could suggest that impact and engagement in higher education must go beyond direct research impacts, such as citations and standing of journals (as is already noted), and must consider the consequential effects on the sector more broadly.

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We propose that for this next version of ERA, the ARC should differentiate between impact on the research community, which would be excluded, and the social and economic impact on higher education sector, which should be included.

Faithfully,

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