



# ACCOUNTING EDUCATORS PROFESSIONAL PERIODICAL

July 2015

Dedicated to thought leadership and innovation in accounting education

## Accounting Futures: Fostering Creativity through ‘Unlearning’

Nick McGuigan & Thomas Kern, Macquarie University, discuss the limitations of the current standards-based approach to higher education highlighting a significant transition that accounting educators will need to embark upon, in order to maintain relevance. It may be that this requires us to adopt a process of unlearning.

### Future Business

The future business environment is one perhaps best characterized by uncertainty. Traditional models and operations of business are currently being disrupted on mass and this is set to continue into the foreseeable future. Whilst some saw this as befitting solely to manufacturing, it is now well established that such disruption is firmly rooted within the

service sector. The financial services industry currently finds itself in a state of disruption, where startups are looking to completely bypass any traditionally established finance models altogether. Social networking and shared connection is enabling organisations such as Uber and Airbnb to offer a completely different shared service experience that is gaining significant traction. Intelligent software has now been developed

that, not only prepares financial statements, but subsequently analyses them to the same degree a human would. Accounting is therefore not far behind in its disruption.

An uncertain and changing landscape requires a very different approach to business. An approach

Article continued on p. 3



Costa Englezos provides a personal reflection on the research teaching divide, outlining how the gap is dramatically widening and the detrimental effects this is having, p. 6.



Stephanie Perkiss and Nick McGuigan, Macquarie University outline on p. 9, why innovation and creativity are vital ingredients for Australian business schools.



Thomas Kern and Nick McGuigan, Macquarie University appear in our feature article discussing the benefits of unlearning for accounting education.

# The Accounting Educators Professional Periodical

A professional periodical dedicated to thought leadership and innovation in accounting education

## AFAANZ Education SIG Committee

Nick McGuigan  
Macquarie University

Luisa Lombardi  
Deakin University

Sonia Magdziarz  
RMIT University

Scott Copeland  
University of South Australia

## Periodical

A professional periodical that aims to inform readers of latest events, national and international initiatives and updates, news, research and general happenings in the area of accounting education.

Designed to provide a source of dissemination for the Accounting Education research community in Australasia, to encourage and foster further collaborations between academics and with the accounting profession to provide a source of professional development.

## Co-Editors

Nick McGuigan and Thomas Kern

Issue Dates: July, December

Contributions for the next issue must reach the editors by 01st June 2015. Items should be sent to [afaanzedmag@gmail.com](mailto:afaanzedmag@gmail.com). These should be emailed in Microsoft office applications or RTF format, with images as JPG, GIF or TIFF formats.

Views expressed in the Accounting Educator Professional Periodical are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of AFAANZ. Written material from the Accounting Educator Professional Periodical may be reproduced, providing its source is acknowledged.

## From the Editors

The AE Professional Periodical providing you with leading updates, national and international initiatives, collaborations and research in the area of accounting education.

It is hard to believe that we have now reached the mid-point of 2016 already! With our themed accounting education SIG focussing on technology in accounting education we felt it appropriate to provide a themed issue looking at what the future holds for Accounting Education in Australia. Well the year is soon coming to an end and there is a great deal happening in the accounting education Australasian space during 2014. This issue sees the profile of two incredible Accounting Education researchers Dr. Laura Maran, RMIT University (p. 15) and Dr. Bonnie Hampson, University of Southern Queensland (p. 5).

Our cover story this issue, provided by Nick McGuigan and Thomas Kern, Macquarie University discusses the need for accounting educators to engage in a process of unlearning in order to move beyond current boundaries and invent anew.

Costa Engelzos, RMIT University provides a personal reflection on the current academic environment and the need for universities to adopt a

balanced approach on staff recruitment (p.6), while Dr. Stephanie Perkiss, Macquarie University urges business schools to adopt a creative approach to accounting education (p. 9). Dr. Rahat Munir, Macquarie University discuss the changing landscape of the accounting profession, (p. 14).

The upcoming AFAANZ Accounting Education SIG 2015 is profiled where Technology in Accounting Education is our theme. We would love to hear from you - tell us what you would like to see discussed at the conference and the issues raised.

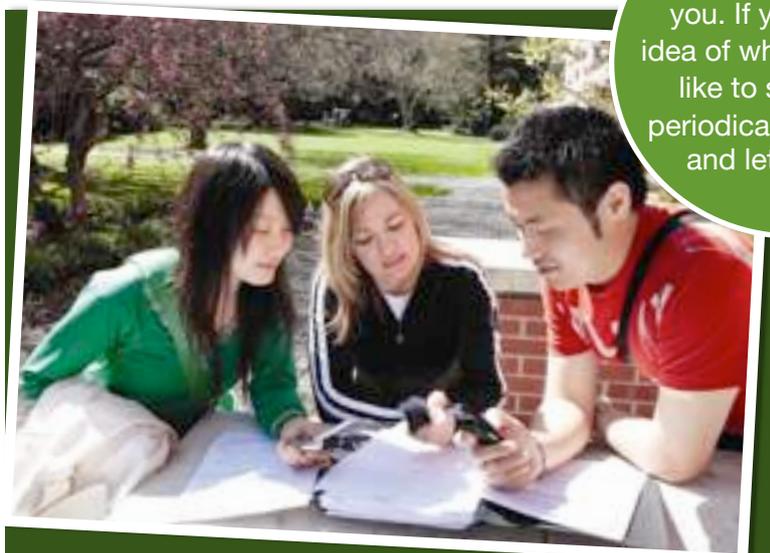
We provide you throughout with upcoming events, call for papers and items to be aware of and watch out for.

Like us on [Facebook!](#)

This is your periodical and as such we would like to hear from you with your ideas, comments and suggestions for future issues. If you know of something interesting happening at your campus, articles to contribute, events, items to include or comments on issues facing Accounting Education get in touch [afaanzedmag@gmail.com](mailto:afaanzedmag@gmail.com).

Nick McGuigan and  
Thomas Kern

We would like to hear from you. If you have an idea of what you would like to see in your periodical get in touch and let us know.



that values holism and systems design thinking, where large scale trends and analysis of divergent variables become the norm, where curiosity and questioning is natural and thinking 'outside-the-box' a common everyday necessity. This requires a very different form of education than what we currently have – one that places an emphasis on creativity, innovation and uniqueness.

### Industrial Education

The education model we are so familiar with was built for an industrial age and era. Interestingly, pre-19th Century there was no formal public education system, anywhere around the world. These public forms of education came into existence to meet the needs of industrialism, resulting in a standardised workforce capable of mass production. We now have an education system mirroring an industrialised workforce – a standardised system; where all individuals are exposed to the same material to reproduce exactly the same outcome over and over again. Illustrating the impacts of this, a recent student of the authors commented on their experience, stating “just walking around the university makes you tired. It makes you numb ...”

And yet in the words of Sir Ken Robertson - “We have this extraordinary human power – the power of imagination. We take it totally for granted. This capacity to

bring into mind things that aren't present and on that basis to hypothesise about things that have never been, but could be. Every feature of human culture, in my view, is the consequence of this unique capacity”. It appears that this innate human characteristic and ability is being stifled by the current education environment as we take for granted certain concepts about how education should be, about what it means to be educated, about what society needs and its economic purpose. But what happens when these turn out not to be valid anymore?

### Where is this Leading to?

The education environment in which we currently find ourselves, is one characterised by paradox. We seem to have this gut feeling that innovation and creativity is critical for business - we hear this disguised in terms such as 'personal branding', 'entrepreneurship' and 'competitive advantage' - and yet we blindly focus on quantifiable outcomes. We teach in silos rather than searching with our students for bigger, holistic and integrated pictures. The insistence on formal examination in our programs is so far removed from 'real-world' experience and is stifling creativity and stopping divergent opinion.

We are preparing our students for work – but it is dubious whether such work will continue to exist. We are perpetuating 'the' dream for our students – work hard, go to

university, acquire your qualifications in order to get a nice middle-class job. Recently, the Australian Treasurer, Hon. Joe Hockey MP summed this up best when providing advice to first homebuyers - “get a good job that pays good money”. The problem is that the traditional career we are continuing to focus upon through our education

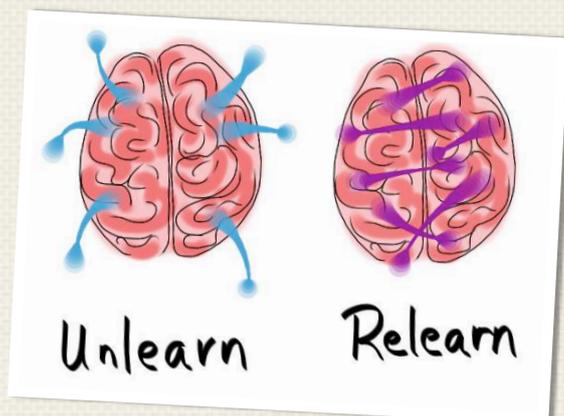
and societal norm is failing. Many of today's jobs will no longer exist in the near future, as intelligent machines increasingly take on that work instead. It is becoming clearer that not everyone will have work (at least as we currently know it) and therefore we need to start thinking about education for non-work and what that might mean.

Perhaps worst of all in university education we are imagining a future two years from now! Rather than taking any form of long-term, considered and strategic approach we seem to be scrambling at the operational.

It is the authors' belief that once being aware of this changing dynamic and the world which students are soon to face and, at the same time, failing to act, choosing instead to continue educating in conventional ways, is morally irreconcilable.

### A Centennial Message

A change in the education of accountants has been touted for quite some time in literature, professional and academic commissioned reports. Sterrett (1905, p. 8) in the inaugural issue of Journal of Accountancy writes “the time has come, however, for a broader view, and it is necessary that accountants should make a concerted movement to lift the standard of preliminary education of their profession. If accountancy is to rank among other learned professions, it must require of every applicant for admission, a standard of preliminary education equivalent to that which is required by law and medicine.” Not a great deal has changed over a century later with commissioned reports (see for example, AECC, 1990; Matthews et al. 1990; Albrecht & Sack, 2000; Pathways Commission, 2012) essentially stating a similar by-line: induce a broader, more integrated approach to accounting curricula design.



## Engaging in a process of 'Unlearning'

Alvin Toffler, an American futurist, said "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn". What he refers to, as an unlearning is something that emerged from the Bauhaus School educational movement of 1920s, Weimar, Germany. The educational philosophy was based upon a need to unlearn what one currently knows in order to relearn, in a different way. In other words, the puzzle presented when taking something apart and putting it together in a different, reconceptualised way.

The foundation course of the Bauhaus School began with a period of creative experiment, where students were trained to unlearn old ways of doing things and relearn through their own experience. The aim was to free students of all conventions and assumptions so that they could discover their creative potential. The aim therefore was not necessarily to create works of art but to gather experience and develop their innate talents. Through the process of discovery came creativity.

The very same principle may very well apply to accounting education and its efforts to, for lack of a better word, recalibrate. To navigate life, we apply a kind of internal filter that organises the world into priority, non-essentials and things of unimportance. It is a very useful tool for getting things done quickly. But to what extent are we losing the richness of experience? How far does it limit our powers of perception, understanding and creativity? What might happen if one were to shed one's own received theory, style, technique? Forget for a moment how we think we know, to make experiments to discover reality afresh, to uncover the creative potential that lies beneath.

In developing and building a capacity to 'unlearn' amongst both learners and educators a critical and reflective culture is being created that enables for a deeper understanding of the 'ways of thinking' as a business professional. It is argued that through a process of 'unlearning' an opening of the accounting curriculum occurs, resulting in a creative, dynamic and engaging space for learners and educators to engage.

## A Change Process

The world currently presenting itself is asking us to fundamentally reflect on what we mean by education. It is the belief in knowledge transfer, depicted through many of our contemporaries belief that knowledge is held within them and transferred by means of lecture, which is being replaced by technology – not education itself.

To prepare individuals for a unique future in an age of information we need to build intellectual capacity – to think in ever more complex ways. Abandon pre-existing pathways and norms as they become increasingly redundant. Learning in the future is likely to take on non-formal characteristics, where discovery and exploration become key, curiosity and reflection are a mainstay and inquiry-based contextual appreciation common practice.

In this way, our educational focus will result in a canopy of thoughts for the learner - "where every individual exists with a network of thoughts, of crisscrossing ideas, dilemmas and dreams that they generate and carry along with them consciously and subconsciously. These thoughts form a canopy above us – simultaneously protecting and blocking us. The individual is able to peer up into the overwhelming canopy of thoughts and in a moment of clarity reach up to connect with a focused idea. The individual, as the protagonist in their own life, become the roots for these thoughts to become formed ideas, which can then be acted upon" (Sykes-Smith, E., 2015, p. 26). For this is the basis

of reflection, creativity and critical thought – all essential to a unique education.

It is unclear whether we will see all of this change in our lifetime – but certainly those we educate will. Knowing this, do we not have a moral responsibility as educators to assist our students in such a transition? For, unless we break the chains of our current education practice, how can we help our protégés prepare for a world to which we cannot yet relate?

## References

- Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC). (1990). Objectives of education for accountants: Position Statement No. 1. *Issues in Accounting Education*, 5(2), p. 307-312.
- Albrecht, W.S. & Sack, R.J. (2000). *Accounting Education: Charting the course through a perilous future*. Accounting Education Series, Vol. 16 Sarasota, FL: American Accounting Association.
- Matthews, M.R., Jackson, M. & Brown, P. (1990). *Accounting for Higher Education: Report of the Review of the Accounting Discipline in Higher Education*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Pathways Commission. (2012). *Pathways commission Update: charting a national higher education strategy for the next generation of accountants*. Presentation given to the Accounting Programs Leadership Group/ Federation of Schools of Accountancy Meeting, New Orleans, USA, February 12, 2012.
- Sterrett, J.E. (1905). Education and training of a certified public accountant. *Journal of Accountancy*, 1(1), 1-15.
- Sykes-Smith, E. (2015) *A Canopy of Thoughts*. In Hammon, A., and Hammon, D. (Eds). *Sculpture at Scenic World: 2015 Exhibition*. Katoomba, NSW: Scenic World, p. 26.

"The illiterate of the 21st C will not be those who cannot read & write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn & relearn"  
- Alvin Toffler

## Call for Papers

*Special Issue on Improving the Teaching & Learning Experience of Tertiary Accounting Students*

*Accounting Education: An International Journal*

The rationale for this special issue arises from the typically poor levels of satisfaction accounting students associate with their teaching and learning. The National Student Survey conducted in the UK and the Course Experience Questionnaire conducted in Australia, both of which are used to measure student satisfaction with their tertiary education experience, indicate the accounting discipline performs poorly relative to the other academic disciplines.

Why accounting students' satisfaction rating should trail other academic disciplines has yet to be explored, with unfortunate consequence being reported. Several reasons might explain this:

- teacher attributes and the use of ineffective teaching styles
- class compositions that can contain a high proportion of international students

- teaching context and the highly technical nature of accounting.
- accounting stereotype of boring and unenjoyable
- extrinsic motivations of the students to study accounting

Papers are called for which examine one or more of these and other relevant factors associated with accounting student's poor levels of course satisfaction.

Submissions should be prepared in accordance with AE's policies and style and **submitted via the journal's ScholarOne website (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/raed>)**. **When doing so, please select this theme from the special issue drop-down menu.**

### Guest Editor

Professor Ralph Adler  
[ralph.adler@otago.ac.nz](mailto:ralph.adler@otago.ac.nz)

University of Otago, New Zealand

## Accounting Education PhD Profile

**There are a number of incredibly talented Australasian academics completing their PhD in Accounting Education and the AFAANZ Periodical is interested in profiling them.**



Dr Bonnie Hampson received a PhD from University of Southern Queensland in 2009. She then commenced lecturing in the Accounting discipline. In taking on such a role in the area of auditing, she developed an interest in embedding the learning outcomes associated with communication skills and skills for connecting and working with others in an on-line learning environment. On being given advice on how to survive group work, self-selected virtual groups completed their assignment. While the idea was not generally well accepted by students in the early stages of forming teams, on completion the feedback was very positive with the following statement being typical of responses: *"Thank you for all your help and advice with this assignment. It has been one of best team work assignments I have encountered as an external student"*.

In addition to lecturing duties, Bonnie has presented papers nationally and internationally and published

in the field of outcomes-based performance measurement and cost management, with a particular focus on the public sector.

Bonnie has spent many years working in both the private and public sectors in senior executive positions. She spent approximately 15 years working in the manufacturing industry with a career progression to Chief Financial Officer. It was in the private sector that her enthusiasm for management accounting evolved. Now that she has taken a career move to academia, she has found that the sharing of her real-world experiences permits the integration of theory and practice. This has shown to be invaluable for students.

Dr. Bonnie Hampson is a Lecturer in Accounting at the University of Southern Queensland, Queensland.

## Accounting Education - Who's Driving the Bus?

Reflections of a teaching academic

Costa Englezos, RMIT University, provides a personal reflection on the research teaching divide, outlining how the gap is dramatically widening and the detrimental effects this is having on accounting education and the student experience.



Accounting education represents a place where ideas, experience and knowledge are exchanged to produce future professionals versed in the ways of professional accounting practice. However, there are a number of stakeholders in the accounting education arena – each with a valid yet conflicting view of what we accounting education should be and we as educators should be doing.

**EMPLOYERS** – complain that graduates lack soft skills needed to make them employable.

**STUDENTS** – expect a quality education and training experience that will make them employable.

**UNIVERSITY HIGHER MANAGEMENT** – whose aspirations to lift their universities' overall rankings are forever calling for greater research and publication output.

Therefore, at a time when students are demanding more from their lecturers, school selection panels are being “forced” to appoint lecturers whose focus and priority is research and publication (PhD is often listed as a mandatory requirement for candidates). Thus they are selecting new staff who will in fact be offering less to their undergraduate students. Less by way of real-world experience to be able to advise students of how best to prepare to enter the workforce and less by way of time and energy available to address students' personal development towards “work-readiness”, beyond just the delivery of course material.

It is difficult to serve two masters. Research and publication cannot be performed on the backstroke. It is a very demanding and time-consuming process. I will never forget being greeted by my econometrics lecturer when I knocked on his door that “Teaching is an interruption to my research!”

Confronted with the reality of growing class sizes and government budget cuts that slash the resources available for schools to service their students, there is a growing use of online “flexible delivery” resulting in fewer students attending face-to-face classes. In an effort to justify ourselves, academics will often state that that shrinking attendance is not a bad sign - they are learning to teach themselves.” I beg to differ, the alternative view suggests that, for the majority of students, attendance at lectures and tutorials is no longer considered a value-adding activity so they do not bother attending.

All too often, in the face of poorer and poorer results on final exams, academics are being coerced to draw a line in the sand of pass or fail at levels well below the traditional 50% - with pressure to maintain politically acceptable pass rates. Is it any wonder that employers are beginning to doubt the quality of our graduates, and the level of their skills and understanding of fundamental accounting principles? If our graduates are going to make a meaningful difference in this world, the “imbalance” between the priority and importance of teaching and research has to be addressed. The longer that universities are pursuing and rewarding research goals, the greater will be the graduate employability gap that

employers will continue to complain about.

We have to make up our minds that you cannot “be all things to all individuals”. Or can we? Yes, it is possible if universities wake up and begin to pay attention. There needs to be a return to a system which acknowledges, values and rewards good teaching, professional and personal development of our students, and the pastoral care of our students. This can and should work in unison with our research-based performance metrics. The interests of all our stakeholders must be considered. It is poor management to place on the shoulders of all teaching staff the burden or expectation that they should develop a research portfolio as well as service the teaching needs of their students. Research cannot be conducted on a one-day per week basis. Let each School of Accounting have the vision of employing a balanced team of staff, comprising researchers and teachers, who are equally dedicated to meeting the portfolio of needs that the school is meant to address.

Although it is often argued that good research then feeds into better teaching, this may not necessarily include all staff being engaged in both activities; rather collegiality enables such connection to be made. It is concerning that ‘teaching only’ academics are being made to feel like second class citizens within business schools, or worse still, being pressured out of the vocation to which they have belonged. It is damaging on accounting education that administrators are sending academics, who either have zero industry experience or such poor

communication skills that students are “voting with their feet” to stay away from classes.

Graduate employers and accounting professional bodies must “step up” and become a bigger part of the solution. I have seen how inspired first year students become when recent graduates and business people of all types of backgrounds address them. It is this exposure to the “real world”, and growing understanding of what the challenges and rewards are, that help them to develop appropriate ambitions and attitudes.

All stakeholders benefit:

Industry - by raising the profile of their organisations and recruiting

the best students. This also feeds a sense of altruistic satisfaction of “giving back” to the university that helped lay the foundations for their own success.

Academics - by creating a higher level of perceived course relevance for their students. This further enables academics to grow stronger networks and connections potentially useful for research activity.

Students – who begin to look beyond the horizon of the current semester’s exams and gain a deeper understanding of the types of skills and attitudes that they need to develop to fulfill their career ambitions.

A united approach is the only effective way forward, if the gap of technical and employability skills of our graduates is to be redressed. Two are better than one. A three-fold cord is not easily broken.

It’s time for a greater level of cooperation between universities and employers to fix this current system that is “breaking down” on our watch.

Costa Englezos  
[costa.englezos@gmail.com](mailto:costa.englezos@gmail.com)  
RMIT University

## Call for Papers

### *Special Issue on Improving the Teaching & Learning Experience of Tertiary Accounting Students*

#### *Accounting Education: An International Journal*

The rationale for this special issue arises from the typically poor levels of satisfaction accounting students associate with their teaching and learning. The National Student Survey conducted in the UK and the Course Experience Questionnaire conducted in Australia, both of which are used to measure student satisfaction with their tertiary education experience, indicate the accounting discipline performs poorly relative to the other academic disciplines.

Why accounting students’ satisfaction rating should trail other academic disciplines has yet to be explored, with unfortunate consequence being reported. Several reasons might explain this:

- teacher attributes and the use of ineffective teaching styles
- class compositions that can contain a high proportion of international students

- teaching context and the highly technical nature of accounting.
- accounting stereotype of boring and unenjoyable
- extrinsic motivations of the students to study accounting

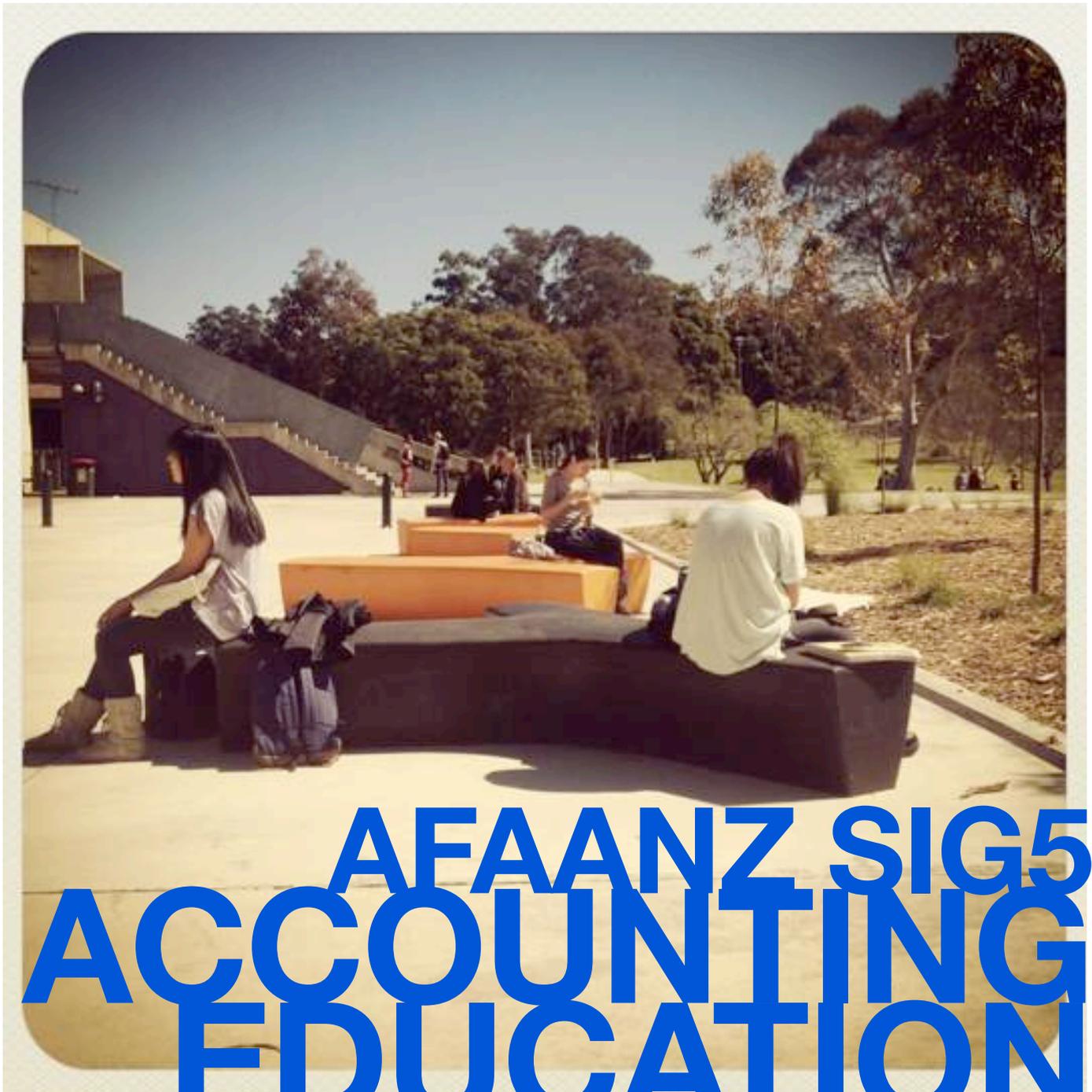
Papers are called for which examine one or more of these and other relevant factors associated with accounting student’s poor levels of course satisfaction.

Submissions should be prepared in accordance with *AE*’s policies and style and **submitted via the journal’s *ScholarOne* website (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/raed>)**. **When doing so, please select this theme from the special issue drop-down menu.**

#### **Guest Editor**

Professor Ralph Adler  
[ralph.adler@otago.ac.nz](mailto:ralph.adler@otago.ac.nz)

University of Otago, New Zealand



# AFAANZ SIG5 ACCOUNTING EDUCATION

## JOIN US ...

date	location	time	Join us in Hobart for what is shaping up to be a diverse and informative professional development programme on Technology in Accounting Education. Call for contributions to the AFAANZ Periodical <a href="#">available here</a> . Submissions can be sent to <a href="mailto:afaanzedmag@gmail.com">afaanzedmag@gmail.com</a> . Programme coming soon available @ <a href="#">SIG5 homepage</a> .
<b>04/07/15</b>	<b>Hobart, Tas</b>	<b>8.30 - 5.00</b>	

## Business Schools Produce Standardised Graduates Failing to Appreciate Innovation and Creativity

Dr. Stephanie Perkiss and Nick McGuigan, Macquarie University, outline why innovation and creativity are vital ingredients for Australian business schools.



Education is about inspiring minds, developing individuals who are naturally curious about their world and who possess the capacity to actively engage in solving complex global issues. Our world is rapidly changing and as a result employers are increasingly demanding an integrated perspective. Such a view requires an innovative skill set amongst graduates that includes sense-making, novel and adaptive thinking, transdisciplinarity, reflective and critical thought and a creative design mindset (Davies, Fidler & Gorbis, 2011). This results in a unique learning journey, where one size certainly does not fit all. A creative approach to education is needed.

However, recent publicity on Australian universities has identified economic institutions, selling pre-packaged, standardised products, in a competitive pursuit of growth (see, e.g. the Four Corners 'Degrees of Deception' inquiry). Academics are under pressure to perform 'above world standard' in their own research areas and to provide favourable situations for students to increase enrolments and maximise pass rates in their teaching. This results in a significant gap between what is valued, by educational stakeholders, and what is taught. In such a commoditised mass higher education environment academics fail to receive recognition for being creative (Philip, 2015), instead

compliance and assurance with standardised learning practices takes precedent. Such practices have suppressed creative academics' ambition to take risks and implement their creative vision (Philip, 2015) consequently leading to the production of standardised graduates.

In universities a loss of creativity becomes apparent when business students are being taught in educational silos, failing to see connections both within and across disciplines. Current degree modeling breaks a holistic discipline into bite-sized chunks, artificially packaging these as 'units', which are subsequently delivered in isolation. This 'cookie-cutter' approach has created silos in learners. Curricula design places a strong emphasis on traditional technical skills, despite such work being outsourced or replaced by technology in many Australian firms (Palm, 2010). Students continue to be assessed through formal examination, with examiners following dogmatic checklists, encouraging little room for student deviation, creativity and intellectual thought.

The loss of creativity, reflection and innovation of business graduates has severe consequences for learners, employers and society at large. Graduates exposed to such diversity may bring new appreciation and understanding

to critical questions and problems that plague current thought and practice. Something currently being called for; in 2013, Graduate Careers Australia (GCA) (2014) conducted a Graduate Outlook survey that considered employers' perspectives on graduate recruitment. Employers were asked to nominate key graduate skills. The survey results showed Interpersonal and communication skills, Passion/knowledge of industry/drive/commitment/attitude and Critical reasoning and analytical skills/problem solving, as highly sought after. Items such as academic results, work experience, cultural alignment and activities, were ranked with lower importance. For learners, a lack of enjoyment and satisfaction is present, where they find themselves lacking in energy, exploration or multiple perspectives (Philip, 2015), required for their future success.



What can be done? Universities must nurture and develop independent and critical thought in its programs to meet the needs of a changing student and employer culture. Academics therefore need to be supported in the desire to move beyond standardised curriculum, methods of teaching and assessment and engage student learning through creative means. Opening the business curricula up, providing learners with a creative space - to own and explore – learners gain valuable insights into their study.

Universities have a broad and diverse role to play in society, where economic efficiency is but a single and not sole driver of performance. Universities should not be operated as financially driven institutions, commoditising a standard educational product but rather as incubators of thought, creativity and exploration that develop future leaders. This requires a radically differing view of education than that held by university management.

Dr. Stephanie Perkiss  
[stephanie.perkiss@mq.edu.au](mailto:stephanie.perkiss@mq.edu.au)

Nick McGuigan  
[nicholas.mcguigan@mq.edu.au](mailto:nicholas.mcguigan@mq.edu.au)

#### References:

Davies, A., Fidler, D. & Gorbis, M. (2011). Future Work Skills 2020. Palo Alto, California: Institute for the Future for University of Phoenix Research Institute. Last accessed 4 October 2014 [http://www.iftf.org/uploads/media/SR-1382A\\_UPRI\\_future\\_work\\_skills\\_sm.pdf](http://www.iftf.org/uploads/media/SR-1382A_UPRI_future_work_skills_sm.pdf).

Four Corners (2015). 'Degrees of Deception'. ABC, 20/04/2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2015/04/20/4217741.htm>

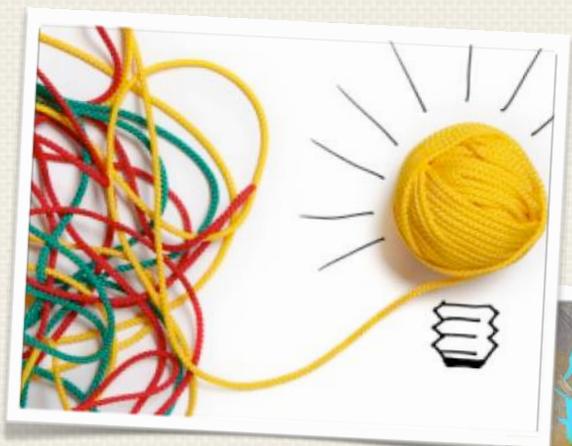
Graduate Careers Australia (2014). Graduate Outlook 2013. The Report of the Graduate Outlook Survey: Employers' Perspectives on Graduate

Recruitment. Melbourne, Australia, [http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Graduate\\_Outlook\\_2013.pdf](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Graduate_Outlook_2013.pdf)

Macquarie University, An Overview of Macquarie's Identity'. Last accessed 23 April 2015. <http://mq.edu.au/about-us/offices-and-units/marketing/our-shared-identity-project/an-overview-of-macquaries-identity/>

Palm, C. (2010). 'Benchmarking introductory accounting curricula: Experience from Australia'. Accounting Education, 19(1), pp. 179-201. <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/26793/>.

Philip, R (2015) 'The invisibility cloak of creativity', Higher Education Research & Development, vol.34, no. 2, p.436-438. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07294360.2014.980880#.VTI-xSGqpBc>.



## Robbing Peter to Pay Paul

Nick McGuigan and Thomas Kern discuss the concerns presented by the research rhetoric encroaching on business schools and the resulting impact this is having on accounting education. Where it increasingly appears, that we are robbing Peter to pay Paul.

### Impending Concern

It is now well established that we live in a world dominated by commodification, heavily influenced by 'The Corporation'. Once confined to economics and trade, such a mindset is infiltrating the arts, science, nature and education, where everything, may it be tangible or intangible, is being reduced to commodities that can be bought or sold at will. This Economic Monoculture (Michaels, 2011) is placing increasing pressure on Australian business schools, where many are choosing to sacrifice education for the sake of research. In effect, it appears we are robbing Peter to pay Paul. The increasing use of our own accounting metric would be quite ironic, if it was not so incredibly sad.

The academic world, too, has, like perfect suitors, followed suit – through the implementation of corporate models, reducing education and research to mere commodities that can be traded at will. The academic environment has become dominated by the quantification of research output and academic quality. Such metrics have become an increasing focus of national governments, research agencies, university executives and individual academics around the world.

Academia has embraced an economic monopolistic view with open arms – with business schools consistently operating on constrained budgets that no self-respecting organisation would dare adhere to. In fact, the very techniques and processes we hold dear in our discipline are now being used against us in a very visible manner.

This seems to have installed a culture of quantification and commodification, reducing the academic pursuit for knowledge, philosophical debate and discussion to a single number, expressed through a journal ranking. In effect, has a currency exchange of sorts been created for the open trading of research and researchers?

But what does this actually mean? Similar to any free market economy, growth has become the imperative for the higher education sector where we have witnessed growing competition among individual academics, universities and journals to achieve higher and higher rankings (MacDonald & Kam, 2007; Segalla, 2008). Imperative growth is forcing us to take short-term approaches, often at the cost of the long-term greater good. Tactical decisions are increasingly being made on the basis of yearly budgetary cycles, presenting a significant and impending concern for higher education. Very few executives seem willing to take a step back and see the bigger picture.

### The Business world of Journal Rankings

The Australian government abandoned the use of its ERA journal rankings as a

direct response to the flaws found in such a scheme and the resulting game playing by universities trying to manipulate researchers into producing ranking-maximising results (Vanclay, 2011). In effect, the process was found to have become corrupt. No longer commonly used in other fields of higher education – such as science, medicine and engineering – why is a journal ranking still relevant to business schools?

Perhaps the answer may be found in the administration and allocation of scarce research resources. A ranking schema, such as the one devised by the ABDC, has allowed for an easier process of measuring, understanding and benchmarking of quality by those tasked with managing such an enterprise. By developing such a means of currency exchange, the evaluative emphasis is being removed from the work itself and rather being placed on the journal which houses such work – a form of measurement twice removed. This results in a standardized operation where measurement relates not to the individual per se but rather the common outlet. In effect, through the creation and maintenance of a journal quality list, the ABDC have created a type of currency exchange that has become prevalent in the current Australasian business academic environment.

Despite the mandate from the ABDC to create a list that avoids the regional and discipline bias commonly found in international journal ranking lists – they seem to have achieved just that. With a currency exchange favouring traditional and positivist international publication outlets the ranking list significantly undervalues specialist research areas and marginalises research innovation. An emphasis is



placed on conservative accounting research that addresses routine problems (which may or may not have any bearing on accounting practice), using accepted methodologies within singular contexts rather than encouraging new, often controversial concerns that are investigated using innovative methodologies and across multiple disciplines (Adler & Harzing, 2009). This is of particular concern today when accounting (and the business world more broadly) currently finds itself in a period of significant and rapid disruption. It is precisely an innovative, transdisciplinary perspective of research that is now needed in order to be able to solve current and future-oriented business and societal problems (see Fogarty, 2014). This would ensure that accounting academics remain relevant in a rapidly changing environment.

Yet the ABDC (2013) provide us with a cautionary disclaimer to their published list, stating “the ABDC list should only ever be used as a rough guide (or filter) for assessing likely publication quality. Journal lists should be a starting point only for assessing publication quality and should not constrain researchers to a particular domain” (p. 5). It subsequently states that there is no substitute for assessing individual articles on a case-by-case basis, no matter how accurately prepared a list might be. Further, the ABDC warn of the potential abuse present in such a list – describing them as potentially ‘dangerous weapons’ (see, for example, Molinie & Bodenhausen, 2010). One may be easily forgiven for asking exactly whose viewpoint is being expressed by such explicit warnings, especially given that it is those very members of the ABDC collective as executives in business schools who, in practice, are failing to heed its own warning.

### **The World of Gaming**

The emphasis that is being placed on the rankings within the ABDC Journal Quality List by business school executives across Australia and New Zealand is placing undue influence and pressure on researchers. Such pressure takes a range of forms

including tenure, promotion, performance loadings, research reward schemes, research grant applications, institutional evaluations and as a form of retrenchment. Of course this is sold to us as ‘the game’ - a metaphorical construct for ‘the’ reality - so engaging and convincing, who would choose not to play?

A game that has been arguably driven by a desire to “identify winners and losers in a name of academic prestige” (Adler & Harzing, 2009, p. 74). This is an inevitable outcome of any form of metric, where certain groups will succeed whilst others are marginalised. But what happens when the game becomes corrupt?

The ABDC Journal Quality List remains opaque – where transparency appears not to be a mandated requirement. What remains elusive to researchers, many editors, and the journal’s readership is exactly how such quality is being determined? A detailed review of the ABDC (2013) journal ranking review report, reveals that what remains undisclosed is - exactly how public submissions received were reviewed and how the quality of journals determined.

Australian business schools are choosing to adopt relatively crude, short-term profit driven performance evaluation techniques, that of journal ranked articles published and research grant income received, to evaluate overall research performance. As Parker and Guthrie (2012, p.8) quite rightly point out, “we have become the willing captives of the ideal of markets, competition and commerce.” One may start to query the sustainability of such an approach as research income pools continue to shrink and publication space in top tier journals remain limited and in high demand.

Publishing in discipline-specific journals, in line with rankings such as the ABDC, is not just a part of playing the game – it is the game. As we increasingly engage in the game, often with much at stake, it is understandable that we forget all too well that this is a reality we choose to be a part of and live within. Like any

social construction, it is individuals who have set the rules of engagement; these are by no means fixed, they can be modified and adapted to future conditions. The question we so often forget to ask is - what exactly are we playing for?

### **The Future**

It is a common fact that quantitative performance indicators have long been an easy way for managers to govern those whose work they do not necessarily understand (Reuter, 2011). But could it be that the use of such performance metrics and ranking tables rather serve as an attempt to further legitimise the self-serving activities and actions of business schools operating today at the expense of their more holistic and societal aims (see further; Irani, 2014)?

The current way of doing business seems to be managing in academic silos, where Peter (education) is being metaphorically robbed to pay Paul (research). Operating in disparate isolation, where arguably the biggest impact we have – on our students and the education they are provided with – is drastically deteriorating. Should business schools rather place a renewed emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual and take a more qualitative, integrated and holistic approach to performance evaluation and measurement? For a failure to do so is likely to result in dire consequences for the longevity of higher accounting education.

Nick McGuigan and Thomas Kern  
[nicholas.mcguigan@mq.edu.au](mailto:nicholas.mcguigan@mq.edu.au)  
Macquarie University

For a more detailed discussion please refer to the full article available here:



<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09639284.2015.1021261>

## References

ABDC. (2013). Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality List 2013 Review Overall Report. Australian Business Deans Council. Retrieved from Australian Business Deans Council website:

[http://www.abdc.edu.au/data/journal\\_review\\_2013/Final\\_Overall\\_Review\\_Panel\\_Report\\_Public\\_Exposure\\_Period\\_\\_Nov\\_2013.pdf](http://www.abdc.edu.au/data/journal_review_2013/Final_Overall_Review_Panel_Report_Public_Exposure_Period__Nov_2013.pdf).

Adler, N., & Harzing, A.W. (2009) When knowledge wins: Transcending the sense and nonsense of academic rankings. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 8(1), 72-95. doi:10.5465/AMLE.2009.37012181.

Fogarty, T. (2014). A dream deferred: Interdisciplinary accounting in the U.S.. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 27(8) 1265 – 1270. doi: 10.1108/AAAJ-08-2014-1800.

Irani, Z. (2014). The world needs to stop listening to American MBAs. Quartz. Retrieved from: <http://qz.com/281796/the-world-needs-to-stop-listening-to-american-mbas/>.

Macdonald, S., & Kam, J. (2007). Aardvark et al.: Quality Journals and Gamemanship in Management Studies. *Journal of Information Science*, 33(6), 702-717. doi: 10.1177/0165551507077419.

Michaels, F.S. (2011). *Monoculture: How One Story is Changing Everything*. Canada: Red Clover.

Molinie, A. & Bodenhausen, G. (2010). Bibliometrics as weapons of mass citation. *CHIMIA*, 64(1/2), 78-89. doi: 10.2533/chimia.2010.78.

Parker, L. D., & Guthrie, J. (2012). Accounting scholars and journals rating and benchmarking: Risking

academic research quality. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 26(1) 4 – 15. doi: 10.1108/09513571311293028.

Reuter, T. (2011). New Hegemonic Tendencies in the Production of Knowledge: How Research Quality Evaluation Schemes and the Corporatization of Journals Impact on Academic Life. *Journal of Workplace Rights*, 16(3/4), 367-382. doi: 10.2190/WR.16.3-4.g

Segalla, M. (2008). Editorial: Publishing in the right place or publishing the right thing. *European Journal of International Management*, 2, 122-127. doi: 10.1504/EJIM.2008.017765.

Vanclay, J. K. (2011). An evaluation of the Australian Research Council's journal ranking. *Journal of Infometrics*, 5(2), 265-274. doi: 10.1016/j.joi.2010.12.001.

## Call for Papers

### *Special Issue on Cooperative Learning in Accounting Education*

#### *Accounting Education: An International Journal*

Cooperative learning refers to the instructional use of small groups of students working together in order to maximize the learning efficacy and learning outcomes of all group members. Teamwork skills are emphasized as an important competency for a successful career within the accounting profession. To address the changes in the accounting profession, accounting education should implement more cooperative learning. The challenge for accounting educators is to implement a well-considered and efficient cooperative learning method which improves student learning outcomes.

The following list is indicative of topics of interest but is not intended to be exhaustive:

- Embedding cooperative learning in the curriculum
- Effect of cooperative learning on interpersonal skills
- Effect of cooperative learning on student learning outcomes

- Group forming process
- Implementation of cooperative learning methods
- Aligning interpersonal skills with graduate employment needs
- Assessment and evaluation in relation to cooperative learning

Submissions should be prepared in accordance with *AE's* policies and style and **submitted via the journal's *ScholarOne* website (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/raed>)**. **When doing so, please select this theme from the special issue drop-down menu.**

#### Guest Editors

Associate Professor Dr. Patricia Everaert  
[patricia.everaert@UGent.be](mailto:patricia.everaert@UGent.be)

Dr. Evelien Opdecam  
[evelien.opdecam@UGent.be](mailto:evelien.opdecam@UGent.be)

Department of Accounting, Corporate Governance and Taxation  
Ghent University  
Ghent, Belgium

## Changing Landscape of the Accounting Profession: Challenges and Opportunities for Accounting Schools

Dr. Rahat Munir, Macquarie University discusses the need for business schools to reshape their accounting programs in order to meet the needs of a modern graduate.



Accounting education worldwide is facing enormous challenges. Challenges, such as digital disruption and innovation, globalisation and market volatility, emergence of new business models, shift in the socioeconomic environment, and rapidly changing expectations of employers for a wide range of skills are threatening the established landscape of learning and teaching. At the same time, the Australian business environment is being reshaped; in particular, the explosion of digital technology - such as the development of computer assisted audit tools, cloud computing (which allows individuals to perform accounting functions irrespective of location), emerging enterprise resource planning and mitigation software, and client relationship management has completely changed the way accounting professionals function within organisations. The role of a traditional accountant professional has transformed from narrowed compliance into a connected advisor, which requires much more skills and knowledge to effectively use and leverage technology. These challenges will determine the future of accounting education over the next few years. Accordingly, accounting schools have to reconsider how they should respond to these challenges and how successfully they adapt their programs to develop graduates with enhanced graduate capabilities and competencies. It is also crucial that accounting educators have the ability to respond rapidly to these challenges and provide students with a demand driven approach. E-learning will become more

important in the future. While e-learning has become a massive challenge (and an opportunity) for accounting educators, massive open online courses (MOOCs) are a reality, and e-learning could reshuffle its approach in a way that may well change the fate of a number of accounting programs.

It is well established in the literature that companies from developed economies are struggling to catch up with the global shift towards emerging economies. These companies need to be more responsive and understand local culture and practices. Accounting schools can help fill the gap with developing conceptual frameworks to understand cross culture differences, self-discovery approaches, openness to foreign cultures and ideas through virtual reality projects/simulations. Other skills, such as entrepreneurship and innovation need to be learned 'by doing'. Several accounting schools are now developing subjects to ensure that their participants interact with industry and learn by practicing. Among others, these include, industry networks, industry partner supervised projects, and interactions with alumni entrepreneurs. Accounting schools can inspire future accountants by turning their focus on those people who are making significant contributions to society and community.

While the recent funding framework has created a shortfall that the Australian universities are struggling to resolve, students always look for the "best deal". Students prefer shorter programs

with low cost, which are contemporary and provide transferable skills. Further, there is a fierce market competition with an increasing number of new competitors are entering the accounting education market. Many of these new competitors have indeed adopted web-based and work integrated learning tools for their programs and offer them at a low price that traditional accounting schools charge. So the vital question for many accounting schools is how to develop a sustainable competitive advantage. As competition will intensify differentiation from other accounting schools occupying a similar position will become critically important.

In conclusion, accounting schools are living in difficult times. Their ultimate goal is to produce leaders who can deal with an increasingly uncertain, volatile and rapidly changing world. Digital disruption, changing nature of the accounting profession and funding are the key challenges that are influencing accounting schools. Accounting schools have to (re)shape their programs to capture the needs of future leaders by addressing these challenges.

Dr. Rahat Munir  
[rahat.munir@mq.edu.au](mailto:rahat.munir@mq.edu.au)

# Accounting Educator Profile



There are a number of incredibly talented Australasian academics involved in Accounting Education research and the AFAANZ Periodical is interested in profiling them.

Prior to joining RMIT University (in 2012), she taught management accounting in Italy for the past seven years. In Australia, she has been involved in the enhancement of education of accountants, such as the development of on-line teaching (e.g. Open University Australia), the revision of Master programs in light of the Australian Qualifications Framework and the professional needs, and the use of international business simulations to inject realism, enthusiasm and interactivity into management accounting courses.

In Italy, she developed a range of teaching and training techniques to address the needs of a range of professionals from executives and entrepreneurs of small family businesses to nurses and physicians, interested in the use of accounting to support strategic and operational decision-making or evidence-based treatments. Through her involvement in a number of courses for the Departments of Economics and Management, Medicine and Surgery and the Master of Economics and Management of the Health Care Organizations (University of Ferrara, Italy), she has

made a contribution to performance management research projects for the public sector, funded by public and private organisations, and evidence-based medicine research projects, funded by the European Union.

From this experience, her research interests have expanded to the learning approaches of business students from a psychometric perspective, the use of visual techniques to enhance communication within international business classes, the impact of interdisciplinary group works in business learning. This has led to the awarding of a professional accounting body research grant, presentations at numerous conferences and seminars in Australia and Europe and submission of manuscripts to both international accounting and education journals.

Dr. Laura Maran is a Senior lecturer in the School of Accounting at RMIT University, Melbourne.

## Call for Papers

*Special Issue on The Teaching Research Nexus in Accounting*

*Accounting Education: An International Journal*

The University is a place of teaching universal knowledge. Its object is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than its advancement. If its object were scientific or philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students.

(Newman, 1907, p.106)

This themed issue welcomes all views on the teaching and research nexus in accounting. We define this nexus as being the symbiotic relationship between accounting research and accounting teaching.

In other disciplines, students are frequently active participants in the creation of knowledge. For example, undertaking literature reviews, creating press releases of new research findings, editing student research journals, undertaking small-scale experiments, consultancy projects and replication studies.

We welcome all perspectives on the nexus, including contested perspectives on its

desirability and practicality in a technical discipline such as accounting, with its heavy emphasis on professional accreditation and the infusion of technical knowledge.

All types of articles, empirical, theoretical, case studies, autobiographical, or opinion pieces will be considered.

### Submissions

Submissions should be prepared in accordance with *AE's* policies and style and **submitted via the journal's *ScholarOne* website (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/raed>)**. **When doing so, please select this theme from the special issue drop-down menu.**

### Guest Editors

Professor Angus Duff  
[angus.duff@uws.ac.uk](mailto:angus.duff@uws.ac.uk)

and

Professor Neil Marriott  
[neil.marriott@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:neil.marriott@winchester.ac.uk)



## RMIT Accounting Educators' Conference 2015



Call for Papers  
***"Future proofing the profession through education"***  
RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia  
Monday, 23 November, 2015

### Program

The Sixth Annual RMIT Accounting Educators' Conference will be held in Melbourne, Australia.

Papers are invited on the conference theme. Papers will not be limited to the conference theme and may address the following accounting education topics:

- Assessment and/or learning outcomes
- Evolving government agendas
- Work Integrated Learning
- Governance and compliance in education
- Graduate skills development
- Historical, social or economic trends impacting accounting education
- Diversity in the classroom
- Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
- Professionalism in education
- Technological change
- Teaching innovations
- Learning with social media & mobile technologies

As all papers will be subject to a blind peer review, please ensure that *no author details* are mentioned in your paper. Research proposals can be submitted for presentation but will not be reviewed.

Ideally papers should be a maximum of 7,500 words with an abstract of no more than 150 words.

Papers should be submitted to [AccountingConferences@rmit.edu.au](mailto:AccountingConferences@rmit.edu.au) by **5pm Monday 28 September 2015**. The Chair of the Technical Committee, **Professor Steven Dellaportas**, School of Accounting RMIT University, may grant a submission extension.

**Please note:** When submitting a paper please add "Submission to The RMIT Accounting Educators' Conference, 2015" in the subject line of the email.

### Plenary Speakers, Convenor and Sponsor

The RMIT Accounting Educators' Conference, 2015 will feature a plenary address. TBA.

Conference convenor: Professor Steven Dellaportas, School of Accounting, RMIT University

The conference is sponsored by [CPA Australia](http://cpaaustralia.com.au)

### Conference Details

The RMIT Accounting Educators' Conference, 2015 will be held at RMIT University, Melbourne on Monday, 23 November. The conference dinner will follow at a nearby venue.

Sessions at the conference will include full paper presentations and workshops.

The registration fee of \$275 (including GST) includes a conference kit and conference dinner or \$225 (includes GST) without the conference dinner. (Price is indicative until approved)

# Accounting Education Events of Interest

Scouring the world in order to bring you the latest news in accounting education related events, conferences, seminars, workshops and reviews.



Keeping you inspired

## Upcoming Events

### 8th Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning (CTLA)

8 - 12 August 2015

American Accounting Association, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

[http://www2.aaahq.org/AM/sub\\_CTLA.cfm](http://www2.aaahq.org/AM/sub_CTLA.cfm)

Commencing prior to the American Accounting Association (AAA) Annual Meeting, the conference on Teaching and Learning in Accounting (CTLA) is part hands-on teaching clinic, part mentoring by master teachers, and part staying current on emerging topics in accounting.

### AFAANZ Accounting Educator's Conference

4 July 2015

Hobart, Tasmania, Australia.

<http://afaanz.org/signs?id=28:accounting-and-finance-education-group-sig5-&catid=3>

A Forum for accounting educators to share their research findings in addressing key issues and developments in Accounting Education.

### Accounting Thought Leadership Forum

12 April 2016 RMIT, Melbourne, Australia.

CAANZ, Sydney, Australia.

The Accounting Thought Leadership Forum will bring together accounting educators, researchers and

professionals to openly discuss the frontiers of accounting education innovation research and practice - Relevance and Professional Associations in 2026.

### RMIT Accounting Educators' Conference

23 November 2015

RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

<https://www.rmit.edu.au/events/all-events/conferences/2015/november/rmit-accounting-educators-conference/>

Future Proofing the Profession through Education.

The RMIT Accounting Educators' Conference provides a means for like-minded academics to present emerging and developed ideas, interact in workshops, collaborate and network in an environment of continuing support.

### Meditari Accountancy Research European Conference 2015

2 - 3 July 2015

University of Bologna, Italy, School of Economics, Management and Statistics - Forli Campus.

<http://corsi.unibo.it/Laurea/EconomiaCommercio/Eventi/2014/07/meditari-accountancy-research-european-conference-and-doctoral-colloquium-2015-2-3-july-2015.htm>

### Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Accounting Conference 2015

8 - 10 July 2015

Stockholm Business School, Stockholm University.

<http://www.ipa2015.com/>

## Watch out for ...

Something to watch out is a special issue of Meditari Accountancy Research on Teaching and Learning.

Guest Editors: Grant Samkin, NZ & Lesley Stainbank, South Africa.

Call for papers available here: <http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/authors/writing/calls.htm?id=5418>

### Accounting Education Website

<http://www.accountingeducation.com/>

An online community of accounting educators having been established for over 13 years. A wealth of resources and interesting feeds.

## AFAANZ Accounting Education SIG Membership

As a member you will be joining a growing national and international accounting education community dedicated to the enhancement and growth of accounting education innovation and research.

To become a member of the Accounting Education SIG you will first need to become a member of

**AFAANZ.** The fee for AFAANZ membership is AU\$132 including GST for applicants residing in Australia and AU\$120 for applicants residing outside Australia. More information and online membership is available at <http://www.afaanz.org/afaanz-membership>.

Note that membership is based on a calendar year. The fee for the Accounting Education SIG is AU\$11

including GST for applicants residing in Australia and AU\$10 for applicants residing outside Australia. If you are already a member of AFAANZ and would like to join the Accounting Education SIG, then please email Scott Copeland @ [scott.copeland@unisa.edu.au](mailto:scott.copeland@unisa.edu.au).

So what are you waiting for, grab your colleagues, friends, workmates, clients, and spread the word....