

## The Big Five (5) Higher Education Challenges Ahead in 2025 and 2026

Greg Whateley

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*There are always significant issues and challenges facing institutions in the Higher Education sector and these do vary from year to year with some issues remaining significant for periods of time. In 2025 and 2026 there are high-profile issues that need to be at least considered – if not seriously addressed and supported.*

### **A Return to campus and F2F learning**

COVID-19 changed the landscape significantly – if not permanently. Online (including blended and hybrid modes) became the norm. Many institutions fared very well in terms of student satisfaction given the technology available and student aptitude with that technology. Some on the other hand did not do as well – largely due to a lack of investment and perhaps understanding.

The Australian Government, in its wisdom, has mandated some form of return to campus in late 2023 and 2024 – driven by real estate and retail issues if the truth be known. It is important to find the correct balance throughout 2025 and into 2026 – and *hybrid* appears to be the logical option. International students – who appear to be blamed for a number of shortages – are required to attend largely face to face.

See – The implausible dream - [6113ad\\_f6e729eba5724f96a82be6265051f1ef.pdf](#)  
([musicum20.com](#))

## **Balancing assessment**

The shift from a full regime of examinations – forced by COVID-19 issues - to a more balanced approach has had little impact on quality outcomes or grade distribution. As the Sector moved to a non-examination environment in late 2023 and into 2024 - we need to be mindful of the new pressures associated with academic integrity and at the same time be fair and honest with students in terms of feedback and results. The current obsession with Artificial Intelligence (AI) – now seen as the great challenge to academic integrity – needs to be met head on with Actual Intelligence (Acl).

A shift to the normalisation of grades is a sensible consideration in the new regime. Hopefully, this will provide a fair and accurate grading system in line with the rest of the Sector and at the same time maintain the standards required.

See – Integrity in business and academia -  
[6113ad\\_53bbff3fdd394d979f42c4dc68956d5e.pdf \(musicum20.com\)](#)

## **Scholarship opportunities**

In non-research organisations – as is the case for many private providers – the opportunity to do scholarly activities needs to be emphasised and supported in tangible ways. A clear understanding of what scholarship is – and then a concentrated support mechanism to encourage teaching staff to engage in scholarly pursuits - that support and enhance their teaching - effort is essential.

Once a clear understanding of what scholarship is all about – a simple and accessible harvesting tool needs to be put in place to support and highlight effort as a way of further encouraging staff to make scholarship a part of their daily working lives. Developing a culture of scholarship is not an easy feat – but it is doable. Ongoing profiling and promoting of staff achievement is vital.

See – Scholarship can take on many forms -  
[6113ad\\_2887992fd3a440a4bca4cbcb6414de4f.pdf \(musicum20.com\)](#)

## **Meeting smarter and heightened communication**

As the landscape changed – particularly with people working from home - or from anywhere for that matter – the importance of communication has become more significant than ever. Institutions need to invest in ensuring that communication channels remain wide- open and meetings (of all sorts) are productive and useful for/to all involved.

This will mean managing hybrid meetings, symposia and conferences in a different – though still valuable and informative – way. Technology can assist with the challenge as will a new perspective on when, how and why meetings occur and how we can maximise the benefits of this time together. It will be about quality rather than quantity.

'Management by committee' is NOT a good alternative to strong and focussed leadership. Communication is the key – and should be explored and utilised on a regular basis (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually).

See – Meeting Smarter - [6113ad\\_68dc5833e0994e4caba3133953991eeb.pdf \(musicum20.com\)](#)

## Compliance

Essential to growth and prosperity will be ensuring that compliance is a key consideration when growing and diversifying. Often seen as a chore and a diversion from teaching and learning – compliance in fact needs to be supported to ensure that what is being taught and what is being done -within an organisation - is appropriate and supportive of students specifically.

See – Good compliance is good business - [6113ad\\_6c3cfa0b3a084f53a8373408af0e74d0.pdf \(musicum20.com\)](#)

Ensuring that the HESF (Threshold Standards) are being met - at all times - is an important focus.

See – What are Threshold Standards and why are they important - [6113ad\\_8584b9e8e229438d830f63af90c030dd.pdf \(musicum20.com\)](#)

With the five challenges laid out – the essential ingredient is **care**. That is care for *students* and the way they can best achieve their aspirations; balancing *assessment and evaluation* to ensure quality and fairness (not to mention integrity); caring for staff and ensuring that they are actively involved in meaningful *scholarship* that enhances their own profile as well as their teaching prowess; care in understanding how *communication* can be enhanced and meetings can become more meaningful and supportive; and, of course, taking care to be *compliant* in all we do.

*Straight forward? Easy? Probably neither, but an essential focus for the next few years in particular in what is being called the post-COVID era – possibly best called the ‘slowly emerging from the shadow of COVID’ era.*

**Emeritus Professor Greg Whateley** was until recently held the positions of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (UBSS) and Chief Executive Officer (GCA). He is currently an independent consultant with AGE.