

Topics of current interest 2026 #4

Covering (mostly) the period July to August 2026

The following are recent articles and reports that may be of interest to Deans of Science. Past issues of these 'Topics of Current Interest' are on the ACDS website under [Engagement](#).

1. Exploring pathways in Australia's STEM workforce 2002-2021

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11165-026-10348-3>

V Millar, K Clarke and L Robertson, Research in Science Education, 8 May 2026

- While undergraduate STEM completions have increased slightly, they fall well short of the increase in non-STEM areas. Labour market demand has had little effect on STEM.

2. Why Australia needs a skills-first tertiary education system

<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/publications/skills-mobility-and-productivity>

Jobs and Skills Australia, 17 June 2026

- 'Tertiary education systems must provide more flexible and connected pathways between learning and work.'

3. Analysing the costs of teaching in Australian universities

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-026-01690-6>

G Croucher and M Rahimi, Higher Education, 19 June 2026

- This paper shows that high teaching costs have less to do with discipline and more to do with regional delivery, small cohorts and labour-intensive provision.

4. Return on investment in Australian tertiary education 2001-2024

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1059056026007677>

T Doan et al., International Review of Economics and Finance, 22 July 2026

- While personal economic returns on Australian tertiary education are still positive, they have declined since 2010 due to a growing supply of graduates and shifts in the labour market.

5. New ARC grant schemes

<https://www.arc.gov.au/revitalised-program-australias-research-future-changes-ncgp>

<https://www.arc.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/ncgp-review-final-report>

Australian Research Council, July 2026

- Pages 21-23 of the final report provide a summary of the purpose and funding amounts.

6. ARC – no EOI process for DP28

<https://www.arc.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/review-discovery-projects-2-step-application-process>

Australian Research Council, May 2026

- Analysis shows that the EOI process did not improve overall efficiency or outcomes.

7. Government AI Framework, AI Accelerator CRCs, AI and Employment, AI and Learning

<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/ai-australias-interests>

<https://business.gov.au/grants-and-programs/cooperative-research-centres-crc-grants>

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/workplace-relations/resources/ai-and-employment-australia>

<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/resources/corporate-publications/assuring-quality-learning-gen-ai-integrated-future-role-adaptive-capabilities>

Federal Government, June-July 2026

- The above links are a selection of important government announcements about AI.

8. STEM equity ambition needs structural reboot

<https://www.innovationaus.com/disconnect-stem-equity-ambition-needs-structural-reboot/>

Emma Jones, 6 July 2026

- Eliminating barriers for women's participation in STEM requires systemic change.

9. STEM equity monitor in education and the workforce

<https://www.industry.gov.au/news/find-trusted-australian-government-data-equity-science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem>

Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 28 July 2026

- This is the latest edition of Australia's national data resource on diversity in STEM.

10. Fixing the system: Higher Education reform, student debt and what comes next

<https://discover.vygoapp.com/fixing-the-system-higher-education-reform-get-your-recording>

Bill Shorten, Vice Chancellor, University of Canberra, 28 July 2026

- An entertaining interview with Bill about his ideas on how to reform higher education.

11. ATEC consultation on research specialisation

<https://www.atec.gov.au/consultations/have-your-say-research-specialisation>

Australian Tertiary Education Commission, 11 August 2026

- ATEC seeks views on how to support research excellence with institutional differentiation.

12. Enhancing professional practice in Australian higher education teaching

<https://www.atec.gov.au/news/report-enhancing-professional-practice-australian-higher-education-teaching>

Liz Johnson and the Australian Tertiary Education Commission, 18 August 2026

- Proposed guidance on Good teaching descriptors, Teaching quality indicators, and a Professional learning guide. Plus an exciting proposal for a Higher Education Teaching Hub.

13. Australia needs more people who think like scientists

<https://theconversation.com/australia-needs-more-people-who-think-like-scientists-heres-what-that-means-288734>

The Conversation, 17 August 2026

- An ACDS and UTAS-authored article, timed to coincide with National Science Week.

14. Australian Financial Review Higher Education Awards

<https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/meet-the-winners-of-the-2026-higher-education-awards-20260723-p60i0p>

AFR, 19 August 2026

- Congratulations to all winners and finalists!

15. Australia's Foreign Arrangements Framework

<https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/strengthening-and-streamlining-australias-foreign-arrangements-framework>

Federal government legislation, passed on 20 August 2026

- Enhanced disclosure of foreign collaborations, including researcher-to-researcher.

16. Horizon Europe update + consultation on implementation

<https://www.industry.gov.au/science-technology-and-innovation/international-collaboration/horizon-europe>

Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 24 August 2026

- There is quite a bit of detail now about funding, timing and a September roadshow.

Professor Brian Yates (Brian.Yates@acds.edu.au)

ACDS Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement

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