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Uncertain times in English (and UK) higher education

The organisation and funding of higher education in England (the devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales set their own policy) looks set to undergo a quite dramatic shift. The release of the Browne Review 'Securing a sustainable future for higher education' earlier this month – a review that has survived the transition between governments (see [VC-Net 92](#)) – was followed swiftly by the results of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The scope and implications of the Browne Review have expanded significantly beyond its initial objective of considering funding and student financing. In the timing of its release it has become confused with the much wider CSR. The CSR's purpose was principally to set out how the UK's deficit could be reduced, and it is firmly in this context of major cuts in public expenditure that the Browne Review was released. The CSR sets out a 40% cut in the HE budget by 2014, and freezes the science budget in cash terms – a real term cut of around 9% after inflation. Browne, timed to just precede the CSR, proposes uncapped undergraduate fees, a new single payment system of loans and grants to students to cover tuition and living costs, and a new repayment mechanism to enable government to recoup upfront investments from graduates. It also proposes a series of changes to the regulatory and funding architecture of the sector which it claims would grant institutions greater autonomy, but which may in fact do the reverse.

Competing interests

These two major events in recent weeks – themselves preceded by months of speculation about likely outcomes – have revealed competing interests. Different constituencies make different claims, highlighting the fragmentation of consensus as to the sector's mission. Response and commentary reflect considerable uncertainty about the full implications of Browne's proposed restructure, and of the government's likely response, to be confirmed in a white paper due in the spring. The actual timetable for these changes – which of them are likely to come into operation immediately, and which may take several years – is also as yet unknown (fee increases are likely to begin from 2012-13).

Browne's relatively brief report has more of the feel of a discussion paper, rather than a detailed plan, qualified by the depth of research and analysis which might be expected of such a significant review. It is a very different document to earlier UK reviews – 61 pages to Dearing's 2,000 pages (1996) – and more recently to that released by Australia's Bradley review (2008; see [VC-Net 88](#)). Bradley's was intended from the outset to be a total review of HE, whereas Browne has had to bear much more than was originally envisaged. While echoing Bradley's statements about the need to invest in a sustainable future HE system, Browne and the CSR arrive at very different conclusions about how to do this. Perhaps less constrained by deficit fears and world recession when it responded last year, the Australian government in fact committed an additional AUS\$5.4 billion (US\$ 5.6bn / UK£ 3.4 bn) for HE and research over four years and explicitly rejected the argument that greater private contributions should be sought.

Transferring responsibility – from state to student

Headlines about greater contributions from students – albeit delayed until graduation – have dominated. Fees could at least double to around £6,000-£7,000 (US\$9,500-\$11,000) per year (ministers have rejected the proposal of a removal of the cap entirely). The opportunity to increase fees has been welcomed by some university leaders needing to raise more investment (although any gains have been offset by the cuts to teaching budgets) but greeted with concern by others, worried of the likely effect on access and participation. The extent to which higher fees will act as a barrier to lower income groups is uncertain. Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that the new mechanisms may mean that lowest earning graduates would actually pay less than at present. Nevertheless, lower earning graduates do not correlate to entrants from low income families, and calculations of debt and repayments are one thing, but the 'psychological' deterrent of high fees and substantial debt worries, no matter how well managed, may damage the aspirations of many able students.

Fee increases are significant and controversial in their own right, but there is considerably more, and potentially far-reaching, change proposed by the Review. The transfer of responsibility for funding HE, from the state to students, reflects a position undergirding much contemporary thinking that it is private individuals who gain most from higher learning, and that it is accordingly they who should pay the cost. The benefits of HE are thus defined not only principally in private terms, but as resulting from direct participation. While the public do receive something, this is 'less than the private benefit'. This is in contrast to the ways in which education at lower levels are valued and funded, where the public benefit is uncontested, and seems to cut higher learning adrift from visions of an overarching national education system (see '[National education systems](#)' below). While the report recognises that HE 'helps to create the knowledge, skills and values that underpin a civilised society' and that HEIs 'generate and diffuse ideas, safeguard knowledge, catalyse innovation, inspire creativity, enliven culture, stimulate regional economies and strengthen civil society', it is

principally a sector which 'transforms the lives of individuals' and drives 'innovation and economic growth'. There is little mention of creative, interpretative or cultural strengths developed in the arts, humanities and social sciences, which are likely to suffer heavily in a system where only science, technology, engineering and medicine – although with the welcome inclusion of languages – are deemed priorities for public investment.

These are familiar arguments, but the models and calculations from which such statements are derived are themselves uncertain and contested. While the cost and 'output' of HE may be measured, outcomes and value are much harder to pin down, and debates on the subject are relatively narrow. A richer public debate on the value of education, and HE as a component of this, is surely needed if we are to fully understand funding and policy options and decisions – rather than just costs and payments – focusing attention to the continuing benefits of education, rather than the simple convenience of 'returns on investment'. For many observers, the financial crisis has simply provided the government with the opening it needed to withdraw the public purse.

Market values

Closely related to this are the assumptions made about HE's market value: that it will perform best when thrown open to competition and that the best way of raising quality is to allow student choice to dictate the flows of funding. The cutting of the teaching grant, and the re-allocation of government towards a new fees and loans system, in effect means that funding will follow the student. The obligation to correctly identify the most suitable forms of learning is also transferred in the process, with students required to act as informed consumers, weighing up available information on study options, and choosing their place accordingly. The danger is that choices will be dictated by popularity and not by standards or by a good understanding of future opportunity. Under-performing institutions or courses will, the logic goes, struggle to attract students unless they raise standards. In some circumstances they may be subject to mergers or takeovers. Others however recognise in the market approach a means of helping to re-differentiate and diversify a compressed tertiary sector.

Yet this market suffers from anomaly, incoherence and inconsistency: 17 year old school pupils are unlikely to be well placed to judge the courses offering them the highest return for their money, even if this is desirable. Nor are they likely to be in a position to choose subjects of apparently lower marketable value, or with less obvious links to reliable graduate options, but which nevertheless may help them to develop skills, abilities and ways of thinking which employers continue to value, and which may prove advantageous in a future labour market. Students without a family history of higher education are likely to be even less-well placed to weigh these choices, and perhaps less able to take the risk.

Autonomy and regulation

The regulatory system is also likely to be overhauled. Browne promises universities greater autonomy and the freedom to raise greater investment, although their real freedoms may be fewer. The four HE agencies currently charged with overseeing the sector – the offices for fair access (OFFA), quality (QAA), the independent adjudicator (OIA) and the funding council (HEFCE) would be merged to form a single Higher Education Council overseeing minimum quality standards. At first reading this seems to owe much to the 'light-touch' approach to regulation, yet as some commentators have argued it may actually result in much greater central control, with a single state-connected body effectively able to establish entry standards, determine the proportion of spending on access initiatives, and even the number of laboratory hours on a particular course. The principle of a buffer body thus appears to be undermined, as accountability and direct funding become conflated into a single agency.

UK (and particularly English) higher education is destined to take a new form in the coming years, of that much we can be certain. But is there a case for HE in the UK and internationally, which asserts its values and contributions, ensures it becomes a real vehicle of social mobility, is connected and engaged with its community as much as with the wider world, produces graduates who are flexible and critical, and undertakes research which has a social as well as an economic value?

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National education systems: rethinking reforms, reconfiguring curricula, and reasserting values

The twin pressures of globalisation and employability are having an immediate impact on reform and strategy at different levels of education. Higher education institutions are developing or adapting courses, and responding to 'student experience' or 'student as customer' agendas. National HE structures are being encouraged to embed and implement internationalisation policies, in response to rankings, competition for 'world-class status', the expectations of significant international student numbers, and the appeal of (or dependence on) global careers. But there is also increasing evidence of more incremental change across national education policy generally, with ambitious, long-term and 'whole system reform', in reaction - but selectively - to international competition. The need to integrate different levels or sectors, particularly the academic and vocational, is clearly emphasised (see also VC-Net 96). But recent examples also draw attention to the ethos and approach to learning which students need as they enter HE, and which they will typically have gained much earlier in their educational careers.

Characteristic of many new national education policies is a focus on the curriculum, especially a concern with placing certain elements at the core, and tracing continuities from earlier levels of education. This focus on curricula is in turn a useful indicator of the types of role envisaged for HEIs and the approaches to teaching that are now expected. In the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, for example, debate has returned recently to the complementarity between the university and college sectors. College study is seen to be more affordable, offer securer career paths, and better serve local community needs. Two-year programmes are being promoted, following concerns over completion rates and anxieties about taking time out from the workforce.

‘Education for whole-person development’: east and south Asia

Initiatives already underway (current examples include those in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bangladesh), have two particular advantages: they were often first considered before the impact of the economic crisis was felt, and are being put forward now as longer-term and comprehensive strategies with education goals well into the future. The value of developing skills throughout education rather than perfecting areas of knowledge, of theoretically allowing for a range of careers rather than training too early for a specialist one, and the prioritisation of values and responsibilities, recur. Hong Kong’s formulation of a New Academic Structure (NAS) has one direct and major impact on its university system, with the length of undergraduate study being extended from 3 years to 4. Potentially more influential though is the redefinition of the curriculum at school-level: one of the four core subjects is Liberal Studies, the curriculum as a whole ‘breaks the barrier of traditional arts and science streaming’, and student choices for further education and employment are ‘more diversified’. The Liberal Studies element is cited as a means to develop critical thinking skills and perspectives, as well as encouraging the linking of knowledge across disciplines. Unifying the secondary and tertiary approaches are references to ‘education for whole-person development’.

Bangladesh’s National Education Policy (approved in May 2010 and formally placed in Parliament earlier this month) represents the country’s first such set of comprehensive proposals. The policy, which covers pre-primary to university education, is linked to integrated education legislation and plans for a permanent education commission. It too recommends that, over time, university courses become 4 (rather than 3) year programmes, with the aim of leading graduates directly to a range of professional careers. (A similar rationale, though for a more specific subject area, apparently lies behind a recent Indian proposal to introduce 4 year integrated BA/BSc/BCom-cumBEd courses to create ‘a specialised pool of teachers’.) Bangladesh’s policy also proposes that the National University be decentralised to create local, independent institutions, and that technical education be expanded through dedicated institutes. The school-level curricula underpinning the new unified system include among their seven required subjects ‘education on social environment and climactic change’, while commentary on the policy has referred to its recognition of ‘social, scientific and cultural values’.

Singapore’s restructuring is based on ‘systemic reviews across all levels’ over the last two years. Education review and implementation committees for primary and secondary education have been complemented by ‘new initiatives ... to improve the details of tertiary education’. For HE joint international degree programmes are being developed, polytechnic provision is being increased (20% capacity in 4 years), and vocational institutes are to be restructured and better funded. The education sector recommendations reflect an ‘overall desire to provide a values-based education’, consistent with the country’s Curriculum 2015 review which advocated a ‘broad-based and holistic curriculum’. The priority given to ‘citizenship and character education’ is shown in the development of a separate ministerial CCE unit.

Enabling not just qualifying

The reform of a complete education system by clarifying its educational philosophy, its goals, and its coherence, has the opportunity to emphasise what education can *enable* rather than simply what it *qualifies* people to do. This is perhaps especially so when it is linked to national ambitions – social, cultural, economic – and when there is the potential for it to be realised through already centralised structures. (References are made to maintaining Hong Kong’s ‘competitiveness in [an] international arena’ and Singapore ‘moulding the future of our nation’.) Whole-system approaches can draw attention to ways of keeping opportunities open in educational choice, the importance of linking skills and values throughout education, and the strengths of interdisciplinary study. They also point to the fact that graduate careers depend too on what students gain during pre-university education. In this context some post-secondary education policy to address specific aims – questioning how universities or colleges meet employer needs for example – may not just reflect short-term priorities, but simply be too late.

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Canada

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New Zealand

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Growing knowledge: access to research in east and southern African universities

University libraries have been hit by the global downturn, much as the institutions which house them ([VC-Net 95](#)). But at the same time libraries are also suffering from assumptions from some quarters within HE that they simply aren't needed anymore. The internet, so the logic goes, now provides, and the wonders of Google reveal. Scientific papers and journals can now be accessed from the desktop and as long as there's a broadband connection, researchers can do it all for themselves. This is, of course, a deliberate exaggeration: many academics and university managers do recognise that the digital shift has not yet meant that all content is now freely available. But the growing tendency for much to be accessed online and fewer visits being made to physical libraries (particularly from those engaged in some science research) has encouraged a sense that the value of a library is no longer as distinctive to the university as it once was. Such thinking often translates into financial decision-making and university planning – making it ever harder for libraries in some institutions to justify maintaining, let alone increasing, their budgets. As Megan Oakleaf for one has recently shown, this puts libraries under ever greater pressure to demonstrate evidence of the enduring value that they claim.

Ironically this comes at a time when libraries need more, not less support – strategic as well as material – if they are to successfully adapt to, and to help lead their universities through, the rapidly changing environments of scholarly publishing and research access. The pressure to demonstrate value can be beneficial. Encouraging libraries to think about how what they do can better serve their academic communities – helping to realise their ambitions for research, teaching and learning – and to consider how typical services might be re-thought, is undoubtedly a positive step. Some libraries have embraced new opportunities, exploring ways in which the digital shift can open up new roles and allow their expertise to be deployed in new directions (Harvard university's library labs, or Simon Fraser's Public Knowledge Project are notable examples, but there are many other significant if less high profile initiatives).

But in some quarters the response has been quite defensive, arguing for the continuing importance of traditional approaches to information management, and seeking try to 'correct' users' bad habits in their approaches to 'easy' access world of online information. Comparing many catalogues to the crisp and straightforward search functions of Google or Amazon (which users have come to expect) is a case in point. Libraries may not do well to model themselves on such services, but they do at least need to recognise and better respond to the influence of such sites on the habits of their users' (see ['Doctoral futures', VC-Net 97](#)).

Re-examining the 'digital divide'

The international dimension to this debate often emphasises the 'digital divide', where scholars in Africa, Asia or elsewhere have poorer access to essential academic literature. The focus is typically on the content: the journals, the books, the papers. But what if the digital differences were less marked than we might imagine? The ACU's newly published *Growing knowledge* report – the result of a study commissioned by

Arcadia, focusing on four universities in east and southern Africa (but offering some conclusions which are likely to hold wider relevance) – suggests thinking may need to be reframed. To be sure, scholars in the region struggle to access the breadth of literature which their peers in wealthier countries take for granted. But this isn't necessarily because it's not *available* to them. A proxy measure of 'top' journals (based on admittedly problematic 'impact factor' rankings) indicated that the four universities had around 79% of the top 300 journals across 15 subject areas in their current collections, while 83% of the top titles were potentially available at more affordable rates through a number of major access initiatives.

This has been achieved through an important and sustained partnership between the international publishing community, a number of key access initiatives (Research for Life, eIFL and INASP's PERii) and networks of librarians. Of course the picture isn't yet perfect. There are problems with this 'top journals' approach to assessing collections, while sustaining affordable subscription rates – both in terms of publishers' willingness to lower their charges, and universities' abilities to allocate sufficient funding locally – is far from assured. Universities, even at discounts, are spending heavily on journals, but unless libraries can 'prove' this value, it may be hard to safeguard these budgets. Nevertheless it suggests that the issues are more complex than many imagine.

The complexities of access and use

In reality the problem goes beyond the availability of content, and into the complexities of access and the inability or reluctance of individuals to use them. Technology is important – broadband internet connections and computer terminals – but as this steadily improves (high speed undersea cables have dramatically increased download speeds in the major cities of east Africa in the last two years, regional and national networking projects are creating new infrastructure specifically for academic and research purposes, and universities are investing in campus ICT facilities) the growing issue is how it is *used*, and how it supports the aims and needs of academic work. In general, researchers remain strikingly unaware of much of what is available to them – journals and databases for which their universities have secured affordable-rate access, and for which they have corralled money from strained budgets to purchase, are often underused. Of titles which researchers felt were unavailable to them, 72% were in fact revealed to be accessible through existing databases to which their libraries subscribed.

The complexity of access routes – multiple databases, each with different search systems, each with varying levels of full-text content, and often under-developed central library websites – is often to blame. But so too is the fact that researchers lack the time – or sometimes the inclination or incentive – to fully explore what is available to them. Teaching pressures have squeezed research time, while consultancies, prevalent in the region, rarely necessitate the depth of engagement with the academic literature, or generate new publications. In some faculties, for a host of reasons, there is relatively little research being undertaken. Supplying ever more content – and spending heavily to do so – is unlikely to do much to increase and improve research without associated efforts to ensure that users are aware of it, know how and where to find it, and have the means to search it effectively.

Libraries responding

But many libraries in the region have been working hard to publicise what they have, and to train users in how to use it better. The challenge revealed by the *Growing knowledge* study is to target this effort more effectively, and to make library services more relevant to individual departments and research communities. As one academic consulted noted, it was great to see an email listing the many new additions to the library, but what he really wanted to know was what was there for him – a chemistry professor. The easy assumption that if the content is there, academics will come, has proved unfounded. Continued conversations with academics and students are needed about what is now available – especially given long legacies of under-availability – to ensure that resources get used and that enduring assumptions about still 'empty shelves' are corrected – but also so that the continued value of the library to the academic life of their universities is recognised.

What this points to is a need for libraries to engage better with their academic colleagues. It is individual academics who have the greatest need for research resources, and who encourage their students to use them too, and who may in due course be encouraged to support the library in its negotiations with senior managers, and those who make the decisions and hold the purse strings. The digital shift has expanded the ways to access information. Librarians now depend on strong relationships with ICT departments if their content is to reach users, while information has itself become strongly identified with ICT and less exclusively with libraries, influencing funding decisions in turn. But it has not diminished the expertise and value that librarians bring to the academic enterprise, or that libraries, as places to think and study, bring to research and learning.

Reconnecting libraries to research and to teaching (or perhaps re-articulating and strengthening the links) is vital. As the study demonstrates, there is much that libraries can do to ensure that research resources serve their academic communities better. They can't do this alone, and will depend on partnerships, supporters, allies and a whole host of relationships across the university. But it is without doubt essential – not just to ensure that libraries prosper, but so that research and learning do too.

The generous support of Arcadia which enabled this study to be undertaken is gratefully acknowledged [www.arcadiafund.org]

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Access initiatives:

- Research for Life – HINARI, AGORA and OARE (www.research4life.org)
- eIFL – Electronic Information for Libraries (www.eifl.net)
- PERii – Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (INASP: www.inasp.info/perii)

Managing the data deluge - e-infrastructure and e-research

The increasing volume of scientific data has led to a growing concern with effective e- or cyber-infrastructure in research policy. This is particularly true in the US and Australia, and most recently in Europe. How to collect, organise, use, and collectively re-use, data – especially large datasets – has prompted several national strategies. The EC's report 'Riding the Wave: How Europe can gain from the rising tide of scientific data', also has an international scope. It sets out a vision for 2030 and, while acknowledging the challenges which the scale of such a project involves, outlines the principles and benefits of e-infrastructure, with recommendations for practical strategy, funding, and its 'global governance'.

The context is the massive and potentially overwhelming increase in information which current research produces and on which it also increasingly depends – variously referred to as a 'rising tide', 'data wave', or 'data deluge'. One project cited generates the equivalent of more than 20 new US Libraries of Congress each and every year. Meanwhile hardware storage capacity also continues to grow'. The problem of such a rate of increase is not simply that data becomes unmanageable (and by implication less useful), but that advances in IT will not keep pace with the data needs of research, or that approaches to research will not track the way data is organised and made available. The EC's report is therefore framed with references to 'gain', 'unlocking the value', 'benefits', and 'international collaboration'.

A European view

A High Level Expert Group on Scientific Data (representing academic, research, commercial, and IT interests), developed the EC report following consultations from January 2010 onwards. Formally it reflects the EC's strategic focus on the 'Information Society' and the 'Digital Agenda for Europe', but more widely the European Research Area and the EU's cycle of substantial research funding frameworks. The central principle is a well-established premise of the research process: namely that scientific e-infrastructure supports the 'seamless access, use, re-use, and trust of data'. The ambition, however, is to help foster a 'far-seeing global framework', cross-disciplinary and cross-border, while acknowledging practical needs – the development of principles for interoperability, incentives for data sharing/protection, and effective funding. The benefits are persuasive: widening the potential use of research data – by other researchers but also for better evidenced policy – enabling more integrated academic/business/industry R&D, and encouraging independent (eg 'citizen science') contributions to – and use of – research.

Potentially the most intractable issue will be guaranteeing ownership and privacy. This is due not just to competing research interests, but concerns over data (and academic) integrity, as well as anxieties over potential commercial exploitation. A means of securing and maintaining trust would therefore need to underpin any project, from guaranteeing the accuracy of the data, their use and re-combination in subsequent analysis, to the robustness of the technology in which they are structured and preserved.

National approaches – UK, US, Australia

National level responses reflect the priority being accorded to scientific data, and suggest the ways in which these concerns are framed – repeatedly as critical parts of national research investments, and essential for future research strength, and in some cases as vital tools for securing future prosperity. Research Council UK (RCUK)'s report 'Delivering the UK's e-infrastructure for research and innovation' recognises the UK's achievement in the e-infrastructure it has already developed ('amongst the best in the world'). It argues for continued investment, but more significantly the effective co-ordination of e-infrastructure, not least to better realise its potential for multi-disciplinary research. In the US commitment to the issue has emerged through National Science Foundation initiatives – the 'Cyberinfrastructure Vision' (2007), the 'Cyberinfrastructure Framework for 21st Century Science and Engineering', its dedicated Office of Cyberinfrastructure, and Advisory Committee for Cyberinfrastructure. Despite a comparable focus on how researchers and 'multiple communities can work more easily together, bringing collaborative data and compute-intensive methods to bear on...complex problems', it draws in wider issues of virtual communities and ways of learning. A more recent emphasis on Grand Challenges represents the practical and inherently global concerns which collaborative data-intensive research could particularly effectively address. Meanwhile the Australia e-Research Infrastructure Council co-ordinates its e-infrastructure progress through a series of independent but related projects – from larger data collections and research data commons to peta-scale computing resources. Significant government investment in e-research is intended to support collaboration, the management of massive datasets, and super-computing provision to 'enable researchers to tackle the complex, national and global issues needed to secure Australia's future'.

Realising the potential of mass data

At one level the benefit of effective e-infrastructure is better organised and better attested research. But it also raises questions about how research can be undertaken and how data can be more efficiently re-used. The real power of significant and co-ordinated data lies in its effective analysis. What new information may lie beyond that which was initially gathered? Are the clues (and insights) given by aberrations and outliers in the data less or more perceptible in massive and linked datasets? Realising the potential of mass data depends most simply on the comparability of sources and formats, but effective e-infrastructure should allow not just for different ways of using or questioning evidence, but also interdisciplinary work. Recent e-infrastructure developments have unsurprisingly emerged where the data proliferates (science and engineering). Nevertheless, it is worth acknowledging the needs of– and possibilities offered by new data approaches to – research in other disciplines. It may also be that the pressure to collaborate or compete could restrict the areas in which e-infrastructure provision develops and at what rate it does so. Inevitably, but paradoxically given their aims, references in both the Australian and US initiatives emphasise *national* e-infrastructures, while the driving principle of such research collaboration is that it is *global* – not just in its implications but in the sources on which it draws.

One consequence of e-infrastructure provision, however it develops, is the importance it gives to the systematic preservation and sharing of data per se, and by extension the role of data scientists in its management. There may be new roles in re-configured research teams for specialists dedicated to managing academic data needs, perhaps alongside other forms of ICT and information professionals. It also powerfully re-values the sources and material on which research is built as potentially as precious and as enduring as the uses or the findings which are developed from them. This 'new age of data-intensive science', as 'Riding the Wave' expresses it, highlights the continuities within research. In doing so it suggests that future research questions and the evidence to address them may actually already be contained within currently collected data.

Sources:

Europe

- *Riding the wave: how Europe can gain from the rising tide of scientific data* (Final report of the High Level Expert Group on Scientific Data, A submission to the European Commission, EU, 2010: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=6204)

UK

- *Delivering the UK's e-infrastructure for research and innovation* (RCUK, 2010: www.rcuk.ac.uk/news/100803.htm)

US

- National Science Foundation Office of Cyberinfrastructure (OCI); Advisory Committee for Cyberinfrastructure (ACCI) *Cyberinfrastructure vision for 21st century discovery* (NSF, 2007: www.nsf.gov/dir/index.jsp?org=OCI)

Australia

- National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (www.pfc.org.au/bin/view/Main/WebHome)

- ANDS (Australian National Data Service: (<http://ands.org.au>)
 - http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=47&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=012b14e08efa:238a:151af7f6&RCN=32298)
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Other news

- **Access to Success project.** *Africa-Europe Higher Education Cooperation for Development: Meeting Regional and Global Challenges* (White Paper): outcomes and recommendations of the project 'Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa' (2008-2010) (EUA et al; 2010). Summarises project analyses with recommendations for continuing HE co-operation, for both Africa and Europe-based agencies (www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu/web/)
 - **Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research** (GACER) – an international grouping of community engagement networks – has issued a joint statement confirming its shared support for university-community engagement, particularly in responding to development needs (23/9/10) (www.acu.ac.uk/member_services/professional_networks/extension/reports)
 - **HE websites re-launch – CIHE and NUFFIC.** Among recent HE-related website redesigns is the Boston College Center for International Higher Education (CIHE), and NUFFIC's development of its International Education Monitor service. Both aim to better profile research and analysis on HE (www.bc.edu/research/cihe.html; www.nuffic.nl/home/news-events/news-archive/2010/september/new-nuffic-service/)
 - **India – Ministry of Human Resource Development** (Department of Higher Education). A Department of HE Newsletter has been launched to communicate the activities of the Department more widely and enable greater public input 'on how the Ministry could further design public policies of Higher Education and improve programme delivery' (<http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=65654>)
 - **International HE Rankings.** The latest releases of internationally comparative university rankings continue to generate discussion, on their criteria and influence, as much as their content.
 - *Times Higher World University Rankings* (www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/)
 - *QS World University Rankings* (www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/home)
 - *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (SJTU) (www.arwu.org/)
 - Within the US similar debate has followed the publication by the National Research Council (NRC) of data, and illustrative rankings, on doctoral programmes (www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsitem.aspx?RecordID=09282010; www.nap.edu/rdp)
 - **Preparing leaders for the future: a toolkit for developing administrators in higher education.** ACE (American Council on Education) has made available a set of free online 'resources for leadership development in higher education' (www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Press_Releases2&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=38304)
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Key publications

A selection of recent publications on higher education:

Global Education Digest: Comparing Education Statistics across the World 2010 [UIS; 2010]

Annual international comparative statistics, including figures for enrolment, student mobility, and graduates (www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=8118_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC).

Global Higher Education Rankings 2010: Affordability and Accessibility in Comparative Rankings [Usher, A.; Medow, J.; Higher Education Strategy Associates; 2010] International comparative analysis of HE education costs and affordability, updating a 2005 study (www.higheredstrategy.com).

Governance and Quality Guidelines in Higher Education: a Review of Governance Arrangements and Quality Assurance Guidelines [Henard, F.; Mitterle, A.; OECD; 2010] Comparative analysis of HE governance structures (www.oecd.org/dataoecd/14/18/46064461.pdf).

Higher Education Futures: Key Themes and Implications for Leadership and Management [Kubler, J.; Sayers, N.; LFHE; ACU; 2010] Research on the future of HE with reference to its roles, structures, and workforce, and the specific impacts both of technology and the changing student profile. Also considers the influence of, and perhaps an emerging shift in, values on HE (www.lfhe.ac.uk/publications/research.html; www.acu.ac.uk/view_news?id=58).

Managing Accommodation for International Students: a Handbook for Practitioners [UKCISA, 2010]

Good practice guidelines in managing international student accommodation
(www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/material_media/good_practice_guides.php).

The authors Nick Mulhern and Jonathan Harle are always pleased to receive comments on the usefulness and content of this briefing. News from other Commonwealth countries, which might be of wider interest, is also most welcome. They can be contacted by e-mail on vcnet@acu.ac.uk or by fax on +44 (0)20 7387 2655. This and previous issues can also be accessed online at: www.acu.ac.uk/member_services/research_and_policy_analysis/vc_net
