

Summary Notes: Session 11 – Observations and Summary

Plenary Session

Two working parties need to be established.

What are our opportunities to get in front of the game? What do we want to see happen?

Jennifer: what should historians accept, what should we demand.

Chris: Finishing the work started last year, mapping against Level 8, Level 9.

Size of working groups: 5-6 people as a core group, with wider consultation.

Other ideas for working groups / issues of concern (Cluster Funding?)

Stephen (Melbourne):

Cluster funding rolling down to school level, along with overheads. Someone has lost sight of the big picture in that fees are not being pooled to cover differences in the cluster funding. Rollout of overheads at school level squeezes history because of low cluster funding. What is happening in other universities? Are there solutions out there?

Comment: Queensland has everything (fees, overhead) devolved to schools, plus a deduction / tax from the university. Only 37% regained by school, but overhead also passed down. Federal Government reviewing cluster funding, but submissions for comment are over.

Comment: Engenders competition between schools / disciplines, undermines cross-disciplinary teaching.

Comment: History suffering, archaeology benefiting because of funding bands.

Stephen: Lack of leadership within university and faculty to pool resources to assist disciplines who have difficulty attracting fee-paying students. Who controls the agenda? Is funding dependent upon who can attract fee-paying students, or will there be rational process / distribution.

Sean: too much emphasis on Future Fellows.

Comment: Gaming the system – recoding courses into higher clusters (SS instead of history, for example).

Comment: Bring students in? Community outrage? Are there dangers to re-banding (loss of history discipline identity or staff positions?).

Should we form a third working party on Cluster Funding? Discipline community going one way, administration going another. Stephen to chair.

Is the AHA the right organisation to be our peak body? Do we feed these ideas to the AHA for subsequent action? Through a discipline accreditation process? Or should the AHA not be performing this role? Number of academic historians in Australia has declined from 800 to 400 while professional historians have gone from 200 to 800. AHA might not be right – the Heads of History group? DASSH?

Penny (AHA): AHA sees itself as the professional association of historians. Research may be focused on Australian history, but the organisation has a broader view of itself. The AHA could play an important role, either directly or through the Heads of History.

Comment: TEQSA thinks the AHA is the only credible body for curriculum renewal / standards, but not sure the AHA is aware of the resources, discipline, etc., that it will take to lobby in Canberra.

Comment: Could the AHA form a sub-committee to handle this matter?

Comment: Heads of History are no longer heads of school, but discipline coordinators.

Comment: How does the AHA relate to non-Australian historian?

Comment: AHA / SISH conference in 2005 very successful with AHA as participant – teaching and learning not the only thing the AGA does, we need to get that on their agenda the way that it may not be now. [AHA rep]: will take the idea before the next AHA Executive.

Comment: Go to the [history teachers' organisation].

Comment: TEQSA will expect the AHA to play the same kind of role that the national engineers' organisation does – TEQSA is not sure the AHA fully understands the scope and challenge of such a role. Comment: We need to make a case for robust professional self-regulation so as not to be subjected to top-down bureaucratic intervention. The AHA would be the organisation to go to, but will have to understand the role. Question: advice from british colleagues?

Answer: Leadership and organisation is crucial. Leader has to have trust of the community. Government will have to be convinced that historical studies are vital on their terms. In the UK they had too many professional societies who all claimed peak bodies, and all made a hash of it. Requires smart, unified leadership. UK did not crack this problem and suffered as a result, missed an opportunity.

Geoff: No one is going for anything other than the AGA route. Time of tremendous opportunities. Many things could come out of this that will strengthen the history community as a whole.

Mills: who will control the agenda? Organisation necessary. But the US is too decentralised to be an exact model. Too many times historians have focused on the national level rather than the state level where decisions are made.

Comment: too many colleagues are focused on research at the expense of teaching. If the number of history student declines, the number of historians will.

Request to add references and Cluster Funding links to website.