

8 April 2013

Mr Alan Tudge MP
Member for Aston
Suite 4, Level 1
420 Burwood Highway
Wantirna South, VIC 3152

via email: alan.tudge.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Tudge

Swinburne University of Technology is pleased to make this submission to the Coalition's Online Higher Education Working Group.

About Swinburne

Swinburne is an innovative and inclusive university that provides high-quality, career-orientated education and strong engagement with industry and the community.

In recent years, Swinburne has progressed to become one of the world's leading universities, ranking as one of the top 400 universities in the world, as assessed by the Academic Ranking of World Universities, and one of the top 100 in the world in physics.

Swinburne's emphasis is on high quality, engaged teaching and research in science, technology, business, design and innovation – teaching and research that makes a difference in the lives of individuals and contributes to national economic and social objectives.

We work to advance and build our research through partnerships with industry, our communities and other universities within Australia and internationally, to achieve outcomes that are directly relevant to industry and society. Swinburne's vision is further outlined in our 2020 Plan, a copy of which is at Attachment 1.

Swinburne delivers online education in partnership with Open Universities Australia and through Swinburne Online, our joint venture with Seek Limited.

Open Universities Australia

Open Universities Australia (OUA) and Swinburne have been in partnership for more than a decade. Swinburne's partnership with OUA has been a key driver in developing Swinburne's capabilities in online education.

Students enrolled through OUA are attracted to flexibility and ease of entry. At undergraduate level, open access is provided for students. Postgraduate enrolment is restricted to students who have gained admission into the full program of study.



Professor Linda Kristjanson
Vice-Chancellor and President

Chancellery
Level 1 Swinburne Place South
24 Wakefield Street Hawthorn
Victoria 3122 Australia

PO Box 218 Hawthorn
Victoria 3122 Australia

Telephone +61 3 9214 8163
Facsimile +61 3 9818 3649
Email lkristjanson@swin.edu.au
www.swinburne.edu.au/chance

ABN 13 628 586 699
CRICOS Provider 00111D

Most OUA students choose to study one or two units at an undergraduate level. This provides a pathway for students who wish to engage with university study but who may not wish either to commence or complete an entire degree program.

Swinburne has welcomed the launch of OUA's new study platform Open2Study, which is designed to provide potential students with a 'taste' of higher education. These specialised four-week courses are part of the ongoing innovation of unit-based enrolment in the open market. This represents a new innovation in reaching more students. By providing students with an experience of online study, new pathways can emerge to further study.

Swinburne expects growth to continue for open access online education as an increasing number of Australians pursue educational opportunities online.

Swinburne Online

In 2011, Swinburne established Swinburne Online in partnership with Seek Limited for the provision of degree programs online.

Swinburne Online has a unique online 'campus', delivering high quality degrees with specialised pedagogies for online learning. Swinburne Online offers programs specifically designed to take advantage of new technologies and innovative pedagogies for online learning.

Swinburne Online delivers courses in accordance with Swinburne University policies, standards and requirements, including course accreditation, design and recognition requirements.

Academic design is focussed on delivering a high quality education experience and students have access to teaching staff (eLearning Advisors). eLearning Advisors have strong backgrounds in their respective disciplines and are recruited based on their qualifications and industry experience. They are trained specifically for online moderation.

Students are also supported by Student Liaison Officers who provide with technical, personal, library and general academic skills queries. They are available Monday to Friday 9am–9pm and Weekends and Public Holidays 10am–6pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time).

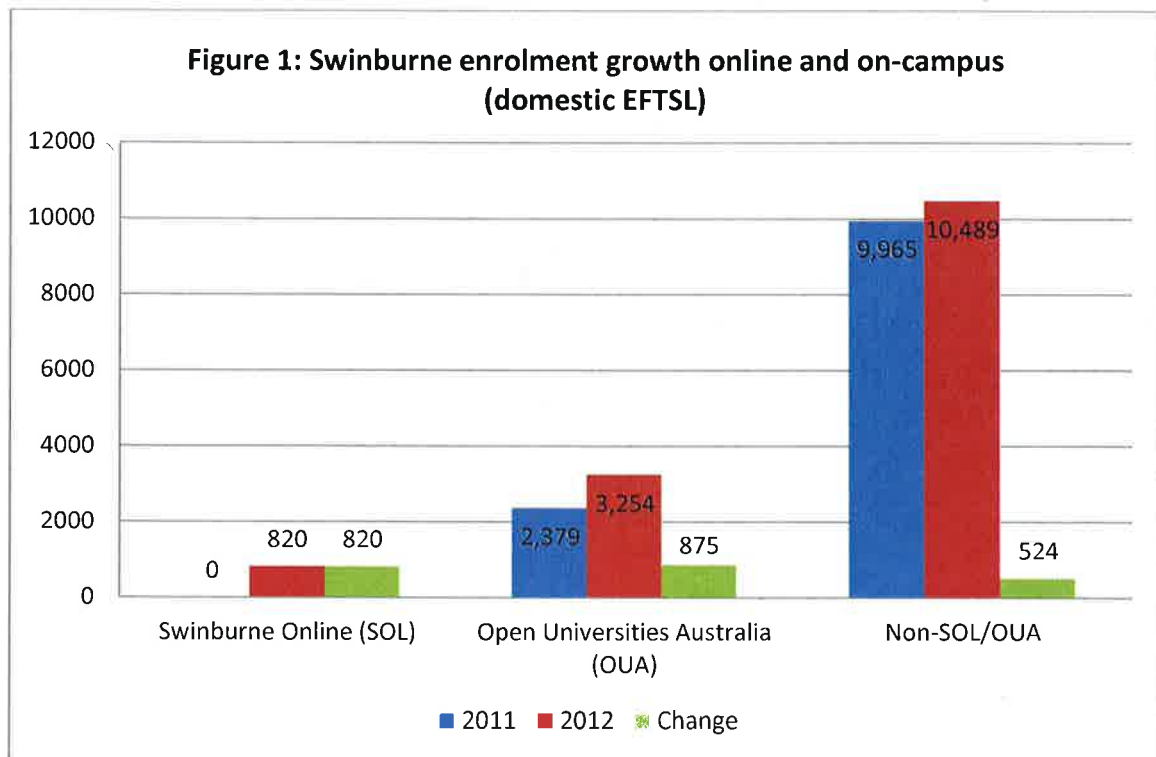
Course materials are available online and Swinburne Online students have access to all text books as e-books for no additional cost.

Student demand for online education

There is growing demand for online education both in Australia and internationally. Enrolment growth in online education is being driven by the non-traditional student population who are typically older, non-school leavers and from lower socio-economic backgrounds and regional areas. This cohort of students is often attracted to the flexibility of online education.

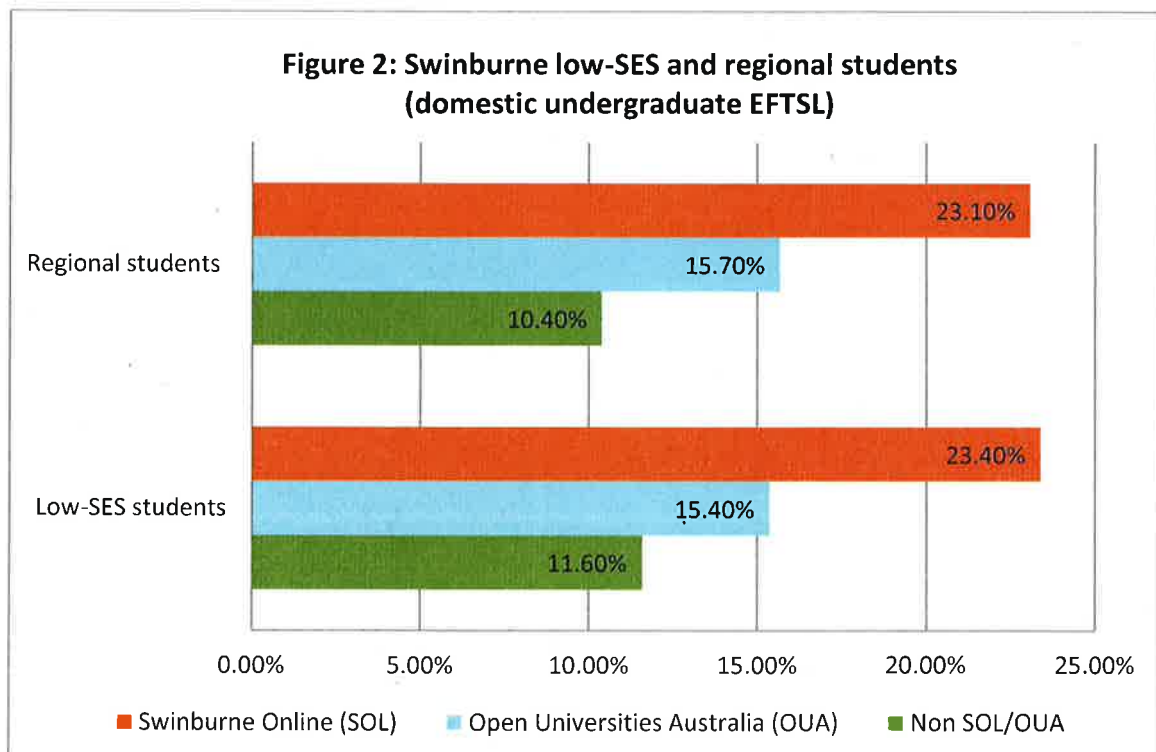
Increasingly, Swinburne is finding that students are choosing online education experiences as an alternative to traditional on-campus study. 76% of Swinburne's domestic onshore growth from 2011 to 2012 was through online enrolment through Swinburne Online and Open Universities Australia.

The figure below shows enrolment growth at Swinburne among domestic students from 2011 to 2012.



Online delivery has also made higher education more accessible to a broader range of Australians, including many who have traditionally been under-represented in university study.

Demand for online education from non-traditional students has contributed greatly to the Swinburne's equity agenda. Online enrolments are out-performing on-campus in low socio-economic (SES) and regional enrolment data.



Regulatory environment

Swinburne's model of online delivery ensures that students obtain the same learning outcomes and quality assurance as traditional campus-based study.

The future regulatory environment should acknowledge both that high quality online delivery will utilise innovative models of delivery and that business models for online education will be different to those for traditional universities offering predominantly campus-based study. Regulatory, quality and standards measures need to be appropriate to encourage the development of online delivery.

Regulatory standards provide an important element of consumer protection for domestic and international students who are undertaking online courses. Swinburne supports TEQSA's quality assurance oversight role in online education.

Students undertaking courses of online study that lead to the conferral of qualifications benefit from a stable regulatory framework that ensures that providers are meeting appropriate standards.

Conclusion

Swinburne welcomes the consideration that the Coalition is giving to opportunities for online education to improve outcomes in Australian higher education.

Current higher education policy settings have encouraged the development of innovative models of online delivery and led to significant improvements in both access and participation in higher education. Swinburne would welcome any improvements to current policy settings which would further improve access to high-quality education for domestic and international students.

I look forward to discussing these matters with the Coalition Taskforce in Melbourne on Wednesday 17 April. Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Andrew Dempster, Principal Adviser, Corporate and Government Affairs on (03) 9214 8084 or adempster@swin.edu.au should there be any assistance that we can provide.

Yours sincerely



Professor Linda Kristjanson
Vice-Chancellor & President