

# EDUCOLOGY TRENDS REPORT 2022: Part 1

## The Case for Reducing the Campus Footprint

Dr Jo Dane, June 2022

Tertiary Institutions should be planning to reduce their footprint. This is the implicit message underlying several articles speculating on changes set to impact the post-pandemic campus.

I have been an avid follower of the Horizon Report<sup>1</sup> over the years, always interested in the forecasting of short, medium and long-term trends in higher education and their consequences for campus planning<sup>2</sup>. This year I thought I would take a broader look at trends emerging in higher education, especially given the ensuing questions regarding what the post-pandemic campus might look like. In addition to the 2022 Horizon Report, I have reviewed the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) Trends for Spring 2022<sup>3</sup>, as well as a range of management consultancy articles all taking a crystal ball to the 'campus of the future'.

In this series of articles I will outline the three most contentious predictions, which stand to have a significant impact on the future strategic planning of tertiary education campuses in Australia:

1. Demise of the four-year degree
2. Changing teaching models
3. Campus workspace: access not ownership



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### DEMISE OF THE FOUR-YEAR DEGREE?

There are widespread predictions regarding the reduction in demand for the traditional four-year degree, in favour of non-traditional education and skills training. The Horizon Report declares that *“students and lifelong learners will be paying closer attention to more practical, personalised, and skills-based courses and microcredentials as potentially more attractive opportunities for advancing their careers than the traditional college degree program.”*<sup>4</sup>

KPMG<sup>5</sup> take this further with the concept of unbundling degrees, or curated degrees, where students pick and choose the subjects and skills that will best meet their career goals. Australian universities are already offering stackable microcredentials that can convert to academic credit<sup>6</sup>. With the tertiary sector ripe for disruption, universities looking for a point of difference are likely to embrace this trend. Taking this concept a step further, it is possible to conceive of curated degrees that combine completed microcredentials or courses from different institutions, potentially from all over the world.

EY<sup>7</sup> take the notion of ‘unbundling’ to another level by posing the powerful ‘what if’ scenario of students accessing their learning using a Spotify model of subscribing to course work that may be bundled like a playlist or selected out of individual interest. Anyone with a subscription to Masterclass<sup>8</sup>, the Growth Faculty<sup>9</sup> or even LinkedIn Learning<sup>10</sup>, will see the potential for a higher education provider to deliver content in this way, as an alternative to the traditional degree offering.

What this all points to is a significant shift towards a ‘customer-based’ model of education, where students have the ultimate choice of subjects and skills that comprise their ‘qualification’. Universities and TAFEs will attract students based on their offer of flexibility and choice, as well as the perceived return on education investment.



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### WHAT IMPACT WILL THIS HAVE ON CAMPUS PLANNING?

For fifteen hundred years, the university learning experience has centred on lectures, tutorials and for some courses, practical or laboratory experiences, all governed by what the university (and increasingly industry) believes should be taught.

As universities shift towards a customer-centred model of learning, where students can curate their degree qualification through stacking microcredentials – and coupled with the hybrid learning modalities explained in the next section – less students will be on campus at any one time. However, when they are on campus it will be to focus on collaborative or practical activities situated in specialist facilities.

The quantum of space types on campus may need to be completely realigned to new patterns of occupancy. Not only will this result in less demand for lecture theatres and traditional tutorial rooms, there will be more demand for active classrooms, laboratories, workshops etc. as well as informal and social learning spaces.

Over the past twenty years, Australian universities have invested heavily in the student experience on campus, recognising the dynamic vibe that occurs with critical mass of students located in 'the right' density on campus.

There is no official definition as to what 'the right' density of students equates to. We know that low density campuses lack life: commercial vendors struggle to survive, students leave campus as soon as their classes are finished, staff are hidden away.

Campuses with a great vibe provide incentives for students to come to campus: events, market days, great coffee and food offerings, inviting informal and social spaces: places suited to high density occupancy, where students, staff and industry partners can bump into each other. Universities will be able to leverage the vibrant campus experience as a powerful recruitment tool.

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In Part 2 I will discuss the changing learning and teaching models that have emerged as a consequence of the COVID19 pandemic, such as the shift away from in-person lectures and the rise of hybrid learning. I will also propose how these trends are likely to impact future campus planning.

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## Endnotes

- 1 <https://library.educause.edu/resources/2021/2/horizon-reports>
- 2 Spatial Implications of the 2015 Horizon Report | LinkedIn published October, 2015. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/spatial-implications-2015-horizon-report-jo-dane/>
- 3 Motley, A. (2022) Trends for Higher Education: Spring 2022 Trends Inside Higher Education. SCUP Available at: <https://www.scup.org/resource/trends-inside-higher-education-spring-2022/>
- 4 2022 EDUCAUSE Horizon Report, Teaching and Learning Edition, page 7 Available at: <https://library.educause.edu/resources/2022/4/2022-educause-horizon-report-teaching-and-learning-edition>
- 5 Parker, S. (2020). The Future of Higher Education in a Disruptive World - KPMG International, published October 2020 Available at: <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2020/10/future-of-higher-education.pdf>
- 6 UWA Plus Micro-credentials : The University of Western Australia, <https://www.uwa.edu.au/study/courses-and-careers/short-courses/uwa-plus>  
ANU Micro-credentials, <https://cce.anu.edu.au/microcredentials.aspx>  
<https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/210929-Guidance-for-portability-of-Australian-microcredentials-UA.pdf>
- 7 Cawood, R. and Vaques, C. (2022). 'Are Universities of the Past Still the Future?', EY, published 2022. Available at: [https://www.ey.com/en\\_gr/education/are-universities-of-the-past-still-the-future](https://www.ey.com/en_gr/education/are-universities-of-the-past-still-the-future), published 2022
- 8 <https://www.masterclass.com>
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