To whom it may concern,

I am a sociology honours student who plans to start a PhD in 2014. I have read through the proposed restructuring of the RHSA and, frankly, I am deeply disappointed and disgraced. Education is not simple or free. But budget constraints should never trump the growth of the students, lecturers and researchers at any university. The proposed restructure not only inhibits growth, but destroys the humanities discourse at the ANU.

I planned on tutoring while studying next year. Tutoring is something I have been looking forward to since my first year at uni—not just because it would have been convenient to work where I study, or because it would have opened up networks and opportunities in teaching, or even because it’s useful for undergraduate students to be tutored by someone closer to their age and experience at ANU. Mostly, I wanted to tutor because I genuinely enjoy learning and helping other people learn. It’s this desire that makes university worthwhile. It’s what the humanities, possibly more than other disciplines, thrives on.

Taking away the opportunity to tutor from students like me, current PhD students, and hopeful undergrads, hurts us—but it hurts the ANU more. It’s not just a matter of bad press; stopping the flow of academically excellent students from undergraduate studies into academic positions effectively stops the flow of new and promising staff in the department. I have heard from a number of reliable sources (tutors, lecturers and heads of school alike) that temporary staff hired from outside the ANU pool of staff consistently receive low to mid range feedback from students—whereas tutors and lecturers who have gone through honours and PhD programs receive much better feedback. Excluding students from ANU’s academic community is a wasted investment. We have spent years cultivating the best academic practices, knowledge, interests and relationships. And now you are pushing us away.

The fact that you’re justifying increased tutorial sizes by saying that it’s “normal practice” across the university shows how little you understand or care about the student and lecturer experience. Ask any science, maths or business studies student whether they benefit from large tutorials, and you’ll hear a resounding “no”. Ask any lecturer whether they benefit from large tutorials, and you’ll hear the same. Increasing tutorial sizes creates an enormous pressure on lecturers not only to teach, but to workshop—whatever that means—and to do research. After three years of full time study, I could easily tell which of my lecturers were feeling the pressures of their jobs. And I can tell you, it made an enormous difference to how well I learned and performed in their class. I believe, as you do, that the ANU hires some of the best academic minds in Australia, if not the world. But those academics can only work so much and devote their attention to so many tasks. To ask too much of them degrades their performance, their standing, and their ability to contribute to the ANU as a whole.
All of which can only lead to the conclusion that the changes are based entirely off considerations of budget and profit. To dress it up as anything else is despicable and dishonest. Crying “pedagogy!” in the face of those who are actually affected by it is one of the highest insults at the top university in Australia. Have the decency to admit that your motivations are entirely financial. Have the intelligence to realise that financial problems are not the fault of students, lecturers, researchers or support staff. Have the courage to stand up to those who are at fault, and take action against them. Have the dignity to protect the university where you work, and which drastically changes the lives of those who go there.

Finally: here are a collection of comments gathered from an online group that were informed of the proposed changes to the RHSA:

- Wow. So glad I got out...
- Thinking about dropping out now.
- I was looking forward to starting a Masters at ANU next year. Shit like this is making me seriously consider overcoming my Go8 snobbery and going somewhere else.
- I am appalled by the business-isation of universities and the particular apparent target of the humanities
- the ANU have been carving away at the Humanities for a very long time.
- What about staff workloads? What about the professional development opportunities for graduate research students who are eventually going to have to teach (if the jobs ever appear)? What about the frigging crucial pedagogical function of small group teaching & learning? I mean, quite apart from the issue of how this is going to blow out teaching workloads for lecturers, meaning research time is totally compromised, it's just fucking balls crazy on all pedagogical counts.
- The least they could've done is just come out and said "We can't afford to pay tutors any more, which sucks for everybody." Claiming this is in any way good pedagogy is plain insulting.
- There goes one of the most enjoyable parts of the program!
- To do this for budgetary constraints is deeply concerning. To pretend that it's for pedagogical reasons is just ludicrous, offensive, and an irredeemable black mark on the intellectual honesty of all involved.

You can also take a look at [http://itsmyhumanities.tumblr.com/](http://itsmyhumanities.tumblr.com/) for more examples of student outrage and distress. These are all comments from past, current AND prospective students. Clearly, these changes will not only damage the existing cohort of undergraduate students, but also
significantly deter students—undergraduates, PhDs and Masters alike—from even considering the ANU as a reputable and engaging institution. The proposed changes are supposedly coming from a desire to allow students to engage better. But it is clear that the changes will do anything but.

At the beginning of this year I believed that the ANU was the absolute best place to finish my degree, embark on my PhD and become an academic. If these changes go through, that will no longer be the case.

Please reconsider.

Sincerely,

Miranda Bruce
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