

Innovative education for the jobs of the future: Higher education's role in a post-COVID world

Monday, 26 October, 2020

Online delivery from Australia (event based in Jakarta, Indonesia)

Nationwide University Network in Indonesia (NUNI) International Lecture Series 2

[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]

Thank you and good afternoon.

While technology has enabled us to continue to run important events like this despite COVID-19 – with participants from all around the world – the pandemic has had, and continues to have, devastating effects on individuals and communities.

I am joining you today from Victoria, Australia in the city of Geelong, which is an hour's journey from Melbourne. We have been in lockdown for many months, but are just starting to enjoy some more freedoms as the virus case numbers reduce.

I know that Indonesia is experiencing a high number of daily cases, and that the social and economic effects are very troubling. As one of your closest neighbours, know that we are thinking of you, and wishing you well – Indonesia has proven itself as a resilient and dynamic country, and I am sure 2021 will be a year of growth and opportunity.

Today, I would like to talk about the immediate future: the opportunities that higher education can create, and what a modern university can offer.

While the next few months and years will present many challenges, I firmly believe that universities like Deakin, and those in the Indonesian Network, will be able to drive a fast and powerful recovery for our two countries and the region.

The new Free Trade Agreement¹ between Australia and Indonesia, finalised in February this year, opens up so many possibilities in trade and knowledge exchange.

In particular, the increased quota for Indonesian citizens to seek vocational training in Australia means they will have greater access to an Australian education experience, and that students from both countries will have more opportunities to enjoy an international education.

Deakin University has always been global in its outlook. We have partnerships in over 50 countries, and offices in ten, including Indonesia. International networks build trade links and promote the exchange of knowledge, and students benefit from an increased understanding of other cultures.

¹ The Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement 2020 (IA-CEPA)

Deakin has proven that you can be a university that has a very regional focus, but strengthened by global networks: the benefits of a global university flow through to local economies in each country.

We are excited about our relationship with Indonesia, with its people, its government agencies, its universities and its diverse organisations. We are excited about the future of the region.

Along with the Victorian State Government, we regard Indonesia as a priority partner in the years ahead. The new Free Trade Agreement will help us to establish even more partnerships that benefit Indonesia and Australia.

Australia and Indonesia are alike in many ways. We are both forward-looking new nations, undergoing profound transformation and growth. We are both multicultural, diverse societies, and inherently optimistic about the future.

Today, I would like to outline Deakin University's vision for the future of higher education in Australia and the region, and how it will work with its partners to help drive social and economic progress.

Deakin University overview and priorities

Established in 1974, Deakin is a young university that is agile, progressive, and has a rare balance of excellence in both education and research. We consistently rank in the top one per cent of universities in the major global rankings, and we are one of Australia's largest with over 60,000 students, with a comprehensive range of courses across our four faculties.

We have campuses in Victoria and offices around the world. We are a leader in the innovative use of digital technologies and online learning – our distance and online education has been one of our defining strengths since our foundation. In fact, the original Deakin Act put before Australian Parliament, stated one of the main reasons for founding the University was *"to provide tertiary education...to all qualified persons whether within or outside Victoria by means of distance education programs"*²; distance education is in our DNA.

For ten consecutive years, Deakin has been rated number one in Victoria for student satisfaction – we are a truly student-centric university. We are committed to lifelong learning, graduate employment outcomes, and providing flexibility for how, when and where students learn.

We also prioritise the *application* of our research – our industry precincts support collaboration and job growth, foster entrepreneurship, and they streamline pathways for commercial research. Our links with industry enable us to embed work experience and the know-how of employers into our courses, so that students are consistently building their employability skills and understanding of what is required in the workplaces of the future.

Engagement in the region

Deakin has had a long engagement and connection to Indonesia and the region. Our commitment to the language and culture goes back a long way.

For decades, we have offered language learning in Indonesian, Chinese and Arabic, alongside European language like Spanish and French. As part of the New Colombo Plan, more than 340 Deakin students have undertaken studies in Indonesia since 2014. We have had an office in Jakarta since 2009 and Deakin College also based there.

We have collaborated with Indonesian government agencies such as the Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, working in areas of national priority for Indonesia, such as supply chain, infrastructure planning, green energy and water management, and public health. We see opportunities for so much more in the future.

² Deakin University Act 1974

Just last week, a team of Deakin researchers at our Institute for Frontier Materials won a global green business ideas competition for developing sodium batteries to electrify motor scooters, buses and auto-rickshaws in Indonesia with the goal of cutting carbon dioxide emissions.

Collaborations with Indonesia and the region are an important focus for Deakin over the next decade, and form a crucial part of our organisational strategy.

Deakin's new strategic direction and ambitions

All our activities will be guided by five central impact themes where we can make the biggest difference to communities in Australia and internationally. These are based on our strengths in education and research, and reflect some of the world's greatest and most urgent challenges. They are:

- Advancing society, culture and the economy
- Building safe and secure communities
- Creating smarter technologies
- Enabling a sustainable world
- Improving health and wellbeing

These themes will be our focus for Australia and the region, providing lasting benefits for individuals and communities.

Over the next ten years, we will focus on our two core activities: Education and Employability, and Research and Innovation.

Our education philosophy focuses on the key areas of:

- Lifelong learning: accessibility and relevance across all career stages: starters, advancers, changers; and non-traditional pathways into a Deakin education
- Short/stackable courses: scalable and adaptable training and education that integrates knowledge, builds capacity and develops critical thinking skills in ways relevant and beneficial to students and employers
- Equity, engaging first generation HE students and students living in remote locations
- Employability for jobs of the future, aligning with national policy priorities; including skills such as collaboration, communication, leadership, citizenship and personal management; and technical competence in an increasingly digital world; entrepreneurship, career skills and work integrated learning

These are the qualities in a modern education that will benefit students and employers the most in the years ahead. Not all universities can be so adaptable – or are so well positioned.

We will continue actively collaborating with our industry and employer partners. For example, Deakin already collaborates with MAP, Indonesia's largest lifestyle retailer company based in Jakarta.

We have been a leader in online and blended learning for the last decade, and plan to build on this reputation – digital learning is more relevant than ever, including virtual mobility: accessibility, equity, and bridging regional gaps; this is one of our specialities.

We will champion the internationalisation of higher education: innovation in international education, including online distance education and starting degrees online/offshore, and continuing on-campus/in-country. We will pursue opportunities for international education collaborations, such as double degrees and online offerings.

Of course, all of this is driven by ideas and innovation. Not just in education, but in research. These two core activities inform and improve each other.

At Deakin, we want to maintain our ‘balanced excellence’ in both education and research, recognising that it is the pursuit of ideas and creativity that will contribute the most to local economies and communities.

Our research and innovation will focus on social and economic progress and working with industry partners to achieve shared goals. We will balance our capability in both discovery and the application of ideas – the translation of those ideas to create the products and services that will most benefit our communities and partners.

The research and innovation we undertake, is all in the context of ‘Industry 4.0’, or as some are now already referring to it, the ‘Fifth Industrial Revolution’.

Even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was much talk of ‘rapid change’ and ‘disruption’ to societies, most of which in recent times has been driven by technology; particularly the further impacts of AI, quantum computing and the ethics surrounding them.

The Fifth Industrial Revolution asks the question: “How can we make the world ‘better’, rather than just ‘more efficient’ or ‘more productive’?”

Almost before our eyes, we are seeing the way technology transforms entire industries, ending the viability of some almost overnight and creating new industries in their place. These new industries are being built almost exclusively on technology platforms, tapping into the shared economy and shared services, like Uber and AirTasker.

COVID-19 is testing our institutions and establishments in ways they haven’t been; it is challenging our networks and their interdependencies. We must prepare for a future that is fast-moving and at times unpredictable: our economies must be capable in specialist industries so that they are distinctive and widely known; this is even more important for regional centres, which so easily become overshadowed by large cities nearby. But equally, they must be able to turn this specialisation to a broad range of applications. When industries evolve, capabilities must be able to evolve with them.

Universities can play a major role in this adaptability – being the link between research and industry. Deakin’s achievements, through its industry precincts and joint projects, has already been substantial, for example in:

- Manufacturing, textiles, health, sustainable energy and battery technology
- IT and the digital economy
- Start-ups and entrepreneurialism

There are many opportunities for Deakin and the Victorian Government to translate this success to Indonesia.

The future looks very positive for long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations and partnerships. Australia and Indonesia have built a strong foundation of common interests, values and priorities; and it is vital that we continue to build on this important relationship during this critical time.

There is a sense of great opportunity. I would like to extend an open invitation for collaboration. If ever we need to build our networks and partnerships, this is the time! Please contact the Deakin office if you are looking to partner with us.

Australia and Indonesia’s national policy directions are to encourage innovation and partnerships that deliver real value to communities in the region. International study opportunities and applied research are two areas that can generate powerful outcomes for our two countries.

Thank you for the opportunity today.