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MEDIA RELEASE

An energy sector survey conducted by the Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) has found that more than 80 per cent of respondents supported an interview being included in the University entrance selection process to test aptitude to a chosen career path.

The survey, conducted over the last 6 months as part of an ATN project funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training also found that almost 95 per cent supported professional institutions being involved in course development to make courses more practical and less theoretical.

ATN Director, Vicki Thomson said the survey was conducted to seek stakeholder views on current energy research and education capabilities.

"Many respondents felt that while the development of university courses was a matter for universities and that industry should not presume authority over course content, there was an important advisory role for professional institutions," Ms Thomson said.

"The ATN has a strong industry focus and will continue to work with key sectors to ensure our courses remain relevant to industry and the professions. We are also responding to calls for aptitude testing with a pilot aptitude test for engineering students to be introduced across the ATN this year.

"The optional ATN Engineering Selection test, developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) will assess a student's aptitude to think scientifically, solve quantitative problems, critically analyse information and display interpersonal understanding."

The survey also found that universities were hampered in their ability to adequately address Australia's *future* energy requirements because of the lack of a 'viable national energy policy.'

"Interestingly whilst more than 52 percent believed the courses available at Australia's universities adequately addressed *current* energy requirements, 60 percent believed the courses available did not address *future* requirements.

"This inadequacy was directly related, according to respondents, to Australia not having a viable energy policy for the Universities to address in their course planning."

In the area of research, 64.3 per cent considered that in the energy sector the most inadequately addressed area in research and development in Australia was nuclear energy, followed by research into renewable energy (35.7 percent).

Seventy one per cent of respondents stated they believe Australian Universities provide an adequate supply of qualified researchers in their field with only 7 per cent saying they are swayed by the prestige of a University when choosing a research partner. Rather, 53 per cent say the single factor which most influences them is researcher experience in the field.

“However, respondents were less complimentary about working with research partners, stating they encountered several areas of difficulty. Fifty per cent classed complying with tax rules as very difficult.

“In a surprise finding from the survey, 84.6 per cent of respondents had not, and were not, receiving support from any of the number of Federal Government energy R&D programs, although 66.7 per cent considered such programs effective at facilitating energy R&D.

“Questioned why they did not participate in the Federally funded programs the two most common responses were they hadn’t known of them, or they were too specific to fit their parameters. 60 per cent wanted the programs better marketed.”

The web-based survey attracted 240 responses. 50 per cent of responses were from managers in the energy sector and 21 per cent were from researchers. The remaining 29 per cent were analysts, consultants and engineers.

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