

## A 15-year longitudinal survey of Australian geoscience departments

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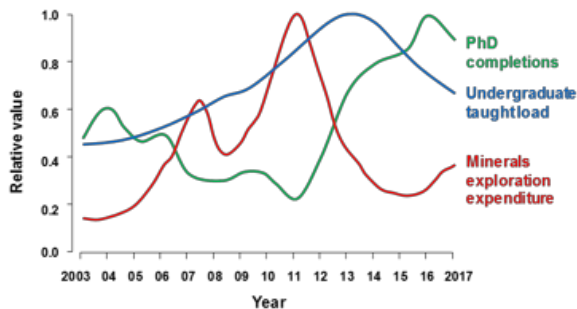
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The Australian Geoscience Council (AGC) has completed the third 5-yearly survey of the 21 geoscience departments in Australian universities, providing a database that now spans a full economic cycle in the mineral exploration sector [1].

The mineral exploration cycle is the dominant factor controlling geoscience student enrolments. Undergraduate numbers follow this trend with a 2-year lag and PhD graduations with a 5-year lag on peak exploration expenditure. There were nearly 300 Honours and Masters completions in 2017, down from 470 in 2012. Academic staff numbers have largely followed enrolments, with some departments increasing substantially over the period 2008–2013. Undergraduate first year enrolments are unrelated to the number of students completing “earth and environmental science” subjects in preceding senior high school years.

Substantial changes are being made to university geoscience programs syllabi and teaching strategies. There is increased focus on core and generic skills (within the geoscience context), field-based studies and opportunities for work-integrated learning in additions to research training, especially in the form of Honours or Masters theses.

Geoscience groups are located within various university structures, ranging from stand-alone department or schools to larger multi-disciplinary structures. The cost of delivering geosciences programs is high compared with many other science disciplines, with universities cross-subsidising departments in return for their strong contributions to international research rankings for institutions.



[1] Cohen (2018) <http://www.agc.org.au/resources/reports/australian-geoscience-council-report/>.