



## EXPLORING ECONOMICS RESEARCH CONNECT: SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS PUBLIC LECTURE

### THE LONG RUN EFFECT OF CLASS SIZE

PROFESSOR IAN WALKER  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS,  
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

The idea that education inputs affect education outputs is a natural one for economic analysis. But smaller classes cost. And the question is — are the better outputs worth these costs? While the intuitive idea is appealing, hard evidence is hard to come by. What is clear is that, on average, children in smaller classes do better than those in larger classes. But the important question is — does achieving lower class sizes *cause* better outcomes? This is a much harder question to answer — to do so, we need to compare the outcomes for children in small classes with *similar* children in large classes.

The best evidence we have comes from experiments — children could be randomly selected for large or small classes and we could measure what happens. But this is a hard trick to pull off. Many things can undo the intention to randomise. Moreover, we have to wait a long time to learn what the long-term effects of this might be.

This talk is about how we can overcome the problems of evaluating the long-term outcomes of class size. The work is important because resources are wasted if they are not put to their best use — then outcomes could be better for the same cost. So if the effect of reducing class size is small relative to the costs of doing so, we need to think again.

Date: **Thursday, 4 July 2013**

Time: **12.30pm**

Where: **Building 67  
Room 302  
University of Wollongong**

**RSVP by email to: [katowen@uow.edu.au](mailto:katowen@uow.edu.au) by  
Wednesday 26 June for catering purposes.**

**A light lunch will be provided.**

Ian Walker has been Professor of Economics since 2009 at the Lancaster University Management School. He has an undergraduate degree from Liverpool University and did his graduate studies at Warwick. He started his career as a lecturer in 1977 at Manchester University, moving to become Professor of Economics at Keele in 1988, then to Warwick in 1999. He has been a visiting Professor at Princeton University, UNSW Sydney, Aarhus and Toulouse. He is a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Labour (IZA) in Bonn. He has a strong interest in the application of economics to policy issues and was a Research Fellow at the Institute for Fiscal Studies for 25 years up to 2008. His research interests are in the operation of labour markets, health economics, and the economics of education. He has written extensively on the returns to education, work incentives, and the economics of divorce. He has a long standing academic interest in gambling and has written on the economics of lottery design and risk taking in TV gameshows. Although he has been a lifelong academic economist his work has had important impacts on policy: his research has contributed to the redesign of the taxation of couples, the structure of the child support system, the reform of housing benefit, the recent raising of the school leaving age, and even on the design of the UK lotto game.

