

Submission to 2019 Review of the APSA Journal List

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Wednesday, 17 July 2019

Summary:

Asian Studies Review (ASR) is the flagship journal of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA), and its current Editor-in-Chief is an appointed member of the Executive Committee of the Association. As an interdisciplinary journal, politics features prominently in the articles published in *ASR*, and in the research interests both of its readers and of ASAA members. The Editorial Board is experienced, well credentialed and knowledgeable of the Asian region. *ASR* is well regarded internationally by all conventional measures of quality, and its standing continues to improve. As the Australian government's priorities continue to emphasise the importance of Asia, journals such as *ASR* will become increasingly relevant to Australian-based political scientists who focus on the Asian region. Below, the ASAA presents evidence that supports its case for *ASR* to be ranked in the top 50 percent of the Australian Political Studies Association (APSA)'s journals list.

Experienced and rigorous editorship

The ASAA appoints experienced scholars with proven expertise in Asian studies to edit *ASR*. The current Editor-in-Chief (David Hundt) is an Associate Professor of International Relations at Deakin University, and his research into the East Asian (and especially Korean) developmental state, and capitalism in Asia more broadly, has been recognised through multiple awards, citations and publications in prestigious journals. He has extensive editorial experience, having been part of the team that edited the *Australian Journal of Political Science* from 2010 until 2016, and he was in the regional editor (Korea) for three years before becoming Editor-in-Chief of *ASR*. His predecessor, Michael Barr, is an Associate Professor at Flinders University, and has training in both history and political science. He is one of the world's leading authorities on Singaporean politics, and his research on the "Asian values" debate and the thought of Lee Kuan Yew has been widely cited. It has also been recognised through success in ARC and his election as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

The journal is inter-disciplinary, and this is reflected in the makeup of the Editorial Board as whole. About one third of its members, including the current and former Editors-in-Chief, are political scientists, and several others work in cognate disciplines such as sociology and development studies.¹ This intermingling of cognate expertise is a reflection of the ASAA's membership. A survey conducted in early 2019 found that about 23 percent of members nominated "political science" or "International Relations" as their primary discipline, which is the largest grouping other than history (31 percent). The editors of *ASR*, therefore, have experience in catering to a wide range of topics that reflect the specific characteristics of politics as it is practiced in and across various Asian societies, while also fostering research that explores the implications of that research beyond politics, narrowly defined.

The journal is rigorously edited, and seeks to maintain the highest academic standards. At present, the average time from submission to a first decision is 23 days, which is prompt by the standards of the sector. Submissions have been increasing at a steady rate during the past few years, and are expected to reach about 280 in 2019. Most submissions come from outside of

Australia, with China providing the single-largest source (just under 19 percent) in 2018. Australia was second (15 percent), and other significant sources were Singapore, South Korea, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the US and the UK. While submissions have increased, and reflect the diversity of the region the journal purports to study, only a small proportion of papers come through the journal's rigorous process of peer review. Manuscripts usually undergo multiple rounds of review, both by external reviewers and by the Editorial Board. As a result the acceptance rate has been within the range of 12–18 percent during the past five years, and currently is about 16 percent.²

ASR is thus an Australian-based international journal that aims to publish the best research about Asia in the humanities and social sciences, regardless of the nationality and location of its authors. Most of its articles are written by non-Australian scholars, and a substantial proportion of these authors are based in Asia. In the June 2019 issue, for instance, five of the nine research articles were written by individuals or teams based outside of Australia, three were written by Australian-based scholars, and one was co-authored by an Australian-based scholar and two based in Indonesia.³ The rigorous and selective editorial practices of *ASR* is conducive to publishing high-quality research, including that produced by Australian political scientists with Asian expertise.

An Asian focus with openness to politics

As an interdisciplinary journal, *Asian Studies Review* takes a keen interest in the politics of the region. Of the journal's six thematic portfolios, two are explicitly geared towards political science: *International Relations*, and *Political Economy & International Politics*. The editors, however, encourage authors to explore connections between politics and other aspects of life. *ASR* thus caters to regional specialists of “studies of history and society... the traditional social sciences”, and also “the new disciplines that are generally grouped under the umbrella of Cultural Studies”.⁴ Topics such as “multiculturalism, economic development, democratisation, diasporas, identity in its various forms and understandings, class, gender and sexuality, generational divides, foreign policy and worldviews, institutional design, state–society relations, religious and other social divides” are of interest to the journal.⁵

In any given issue, about half of the content of *ASR* could fit into a politics-oriented journal, especially one with a regional focus. The topics covered by most-viewed articles in the journal's history include the past, present and future of democracy in Sri Lanka, memory politics and ontological security in Sino–Japanese relations, the policies and ideologies of the Kim Jung Un regime in North Korea, and the politics of Chinese aid to the Pacific.⁶ The centrality of political science and international relations is evident in recent issues too: in its March 2019 issue, for instance, *Asian Studies Review* published articles on topics such as the politics of gender quotas in South Korea, debates about Taiwan's path to democracy in the 1980s, and an “English school” reading of Thailand's diplomacy during World War I. This issue also featured a collection of articles about the political, social and pedagogical aims of China's “interior ethnic minority boarding school” system that caters to students from Tibet and Xinjiang.⁷

***ASR* as seen in competing ranking systems**

In the 2016 APSA rankings exercise, a panel of experts assessed political-science journals and ranked them into four categories. Those belonging to the top 5 percent were awarded ratings of A*, those in the next 20 percent were awarded A, the following 25 percent were awarded B, and the remaining 50 percent were classed as C.

The C ranking that was awarded to *Asian Studies Review* is incongruent with the recent assessments by Scimago, Scopus and the Web of Science. This is evident when *ASR*'s rankings are considered alongside those of comparator Australian-based journals, such as *Australian Journal of Political Science* (which was assessed as A), and other Asia-focused politics journals, such as *Asian Journal of Political Science* (which was assessed as B). The table below summarises the standings of these journals in the APSA list and the three other ranking schemes.

Journal	APSA 2016 list	Scimago (2018)		Scopus (2018)			Journal Citation Reports	
		SJR	Ranking ¹	Citescore	Ranking	SNIP	2018 impact factor	5-year impact factor
<i>Asian Journal of Political Science</i>	B	0.15	Q3 (826)	0.44	272 ²	0.518	—	—
<i>Asian Studies Review</i>	C	0.247	Q3 (590)	0.62	435 ³	0.601	0.529	1.012
<i>Australian Journal of Political Science</i>	A	0.328	Q2 (467)	0.82	528 ³	0.673	0.839	0.932

¹ Quartile ranking (position among 1,137 journals in the category of Sociology & Political Science)
² Among 495 journals in the category of Political Science & International Relations
³ Among 1,111 journals in the category of Sociology & Political Science

Scimago

The Scimago Journal Ranking (“SJR”) is calculated on the basis of citations, but gives a heavier weighting to citations from higher-ranked journals than those from lower-ranked ones. In the 2018 rankings, the SJR scores for *ASR*, *Asian Journal of Political Science* and *Australian Journal of Political Science* were 0.247, 0.15 and 0.328, respectively. *ASR* ranked second out of the three journals, and its SJR was closer to that of the first-placed *Australian Journal of Political Science* than it was to the third-placed *Asian Journal of Political Science*.

A similar trend is evident in Scimago’s ranked categories of journals by discipline, which are divided into four equally sized quartiles. Among 1,137 journals in the category of Sociology & Political Science, *ASR* and *Asian Journal of Political Science* were placed in Q3 (positions 590 and 826 respectively) and *Australian Journal of Political Science* was placed in Q2 (467). *ASR* and *Asian Journal of Political Science* were both placed in Q3, but the numerical position of *ASR* was much closer to that of *Australian Journal of Political Science* (in Q2).⁸

Scopus

For Scopus, one measure of quality is the “Citescore”, which is the number of citations to articles published in three most recent years, as a share of the number of publications in the same period. In the 2018 rankings, the Citescore for the three journals being discussed varied quite widely: *ASR* and *Asian Journal of Political Science* had scores of 0.62 and 0.44 respectively, while *Australian Journal of Political Science* had a score of 0.82. Once again, *ASR* was second among the three journals, and its score was not greatly dissimilar from that of *Australian Journal of Political Science*.

Scopus included *ASR* and *Australian Journal of Political Science* in the category of Sociology & Political Science, and therein *Australian Journal of Political Science* was ranked somewhat ahead of *ASR*: 435 versus 528 out of 1,111 journals. In other words, both journals were ranked in the top-50 percent of this category.⁹ Scopus includes *Asian Journal of Political Science* in the category of Political Science & International Relations, and assigned it a ranking of 272

out of 495 journals in that category. By that measure, *Asian Journal of Political Science* was ranked in the bottom 50 percent of the category.

Scopus has another measure of quality, the “Source Normalized Impact Factor” (SNIP), which is based on the number of citations per publication, compared to the number of publications citing the journal. The benefit of this measure is that it allows for more meaningful comparisons between journals that are included in different categories, because it is not affected by the number of journals in a given category. In 2018, the SNIPs for *Asian Journal of Political Science*, *ASR* and *Australian Journal of Political Science* were 0.518, 0.601 and 0.673 respectively. *ASR* is thus once again the second-ranked journal of the three being discussed, and its SNIP was closer to that of *Australian Journal of Political Science* than to *Asian Journal of Political Science*.

Journal Citation Reports (Web of Science)

Another well-known measure of quality are journal impact factors, which are calculated by dividing the number of citations in a journal over a two-year period by the number of articles published in that period. The 2018 impact factors, which are based on citations from 2016 and 2017, showed that *ASR* (0.529) ranked below *Australian Journal of Political Science* (0.839) to a certain extent.¹⁰ Year-to-year impact factors can vary for inexplicable reasons, however, and the Web of Science therefore produces a range of alternative measures of impact over time. When a longer-term (five-year) measure is used, the impact factor for *ASR* surpassed that of *Australian Journal of Political Science* (1.012 versus 0.932). This suggests that research published in *ASR* is considered worthy of citation, and retains its value, even after it falls outside the two-year window that is used for calculating annual impact factors.

There is a consensus, therefore, among Scimago, Scopus and the Web of Science about the quality of *ASR* when compared with the other journals discussed here. While these ranking schemes for the most part assess *Australian Journal of Political Science* more highly than *ASR*, the gap between the journals has closed considerably since the 2016 APSA list was collated. Similarly, *ASR* appears to have risen in esteem compared to *Asian Journal of Political Science*, and indeed to have surpassed it in the past three years. For these reasons, the ASAA argues that there is a case for promoting the position of *ASR* within the APSA journals list in 2019.

Australia’s regional context

A final reason that ASAA believes it is essential to reconsider the standing of *ASR* in the APSA list is that doing so would send a strong signal to Australian political scientists about the necessity and desirability of engaging in inter-disciplinary work, and in engaging in research that is sensitive to the conditions of the Asia politics and societies. As a recent submission by the ASAA maintains, Australia’s future economic, cultural and security will depend on greater engagement with countries in Asia, a region of rapid economic, social and cultural change. A growing proportion of Australia’s trade, investment and migration links with the outside world occur with Asian countries.¹¹ So the study of Asia should be seen as central to the work of Australian-based political scientists, and *ASR* should be a natural outlet for such research. As the 2012 White Paper stated, “The Asian century is an Australian opportunity... Successive Australian governments have recognised the benefits of increasing Australia’s knowledge and appreciation of Asian languages, cultures and countries”.¹²

One form of acknowledgement of the importance of Asia to Australia is that numerous universities have dedicated Asian Studies centres, departments and programs. Many of the world’s leading scholars of the history, politics, societies, cultures and economies of Asia are

located in Australia, and these scholars produce a disproportionate share of the best research on Asia. Much of this Asia-focused research takes place through a disciplinary framework, but a large proportion of it is inherently inter-disciplinary.

While the ASAA of course seeks to promote the study of Asia on an inter-disciplinary basis, there is also a growing trend towards academic associations such as the APSA formally acknowledging the significance of Asia to the research interests of their members. In 2019, for instance, the APSA conference features an Asian politics stream, and the region was also well represented in the joint IPSA/APSA/OCIS conference in 2018.

Another reflection of the unique place that Asia – and by extension Asian studies – has to Australia is that it is the only region of the world that is explicitly recognised within the Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification. The study of Asia is referred to at the six-digit code level within several disciplines, including *1606 Political Science*.¹³

Australian political scientists with regional expertise need credible outlets for their research, and *Asian Studies Review* is a logical option. Among Australia-based journals, it is uniquely placed to promote and develop research into various aspects of politics in and among Asian societies, including that conducted by political scientists in Australia. For these reasons, the ASAA argues that the position of *ASR* in the APSA list is worthy of promotion in 2019.

Declaration of Interest:

ASAA declares that it is the owner of *Asian Studies Review*.

David Hundt declares that he has been the Editor-in-Chief of *Asian Studies Review* since 2018, and has previously been a Regional Editor of the journal (2014–17). He further declares that he has published one journal article (2015), one book review (2011), and one Editorial Note (2019) in *ASR*.

¹ *Asian Studies Review*. 2019. [Editorial Board](#).

² Data supplied by Taylor & Francis to *Asian Studies Review*.

³ *Asian Studies Review*. 2019. [Volume 43, 2019](#).

⁴ Michael Barr. 2013. [New Editor's Message](#). *Asian Studies Review*, 37(1), pp. 1–2.

⁵ David Hundt. 2019. [Editorial Note](#). *Asian Studies Review*, 43(1), pp. 1–2.

⁶ *Asian Studies Review*. 2019. [Most read articles](#).

⁷ *Asian Studies Review*. 2019. [Volume 43, 2019](#).

⁸ *ASR* was placed in Q1 for the History and Cultural Studies categories.

⁹ *ASR* was included in History and Cultural Studies, and was ranked in the upper echelon of both categories: 150 out of 1,138, and 172 out of 890 respectively.

¹⁰ *Asian Journal of Political Science* was not listed by Journal Citation Reports, so is not discussed further here.

¹¹ ASAA. 2019. [Association of Asian Studies of Australia \(ASAA\) submission on FOR codes](#). This section draws heavily on the ASAA report.

¹² Australian government. 2012. [Australia in the Asian Century](#). Canberra: Department of Defence, pp. 1, 111.

¹³ Asia-related research is also represented in the four-digit fields of *Cultural Studies*, *Language Studies*, *Literary Studies* and the catch-all *Studies of Asian Society* at the six-digit level.