

[View this email in your browser](#)



Dear members,

We are seeking your feedback on how the current crisis of the Australian university sector is affecting Asian Studies.

As we all know, this is a time of great uncertainty for academics, professionals and students at Australian universities. The ASAA believes that knowledge of and collaboration with Asia remains critical to understanding the crises of our times. Fostering such knowledge requires sustained commitments to Asian Studies programs, resources such as [specialised library collections](#), language programs and student exchange programs, and the academic expertise needed to lead these programs. We are concerned that proposed cuts across many Australian universities may endanger academic jobs and programs that support Asian studies, language programs and exchange programs.

Prior to covid-19, we had been preparing a report surveying trends in Asian Studies over the past two decades. On the [ASAA blog](#) we have featured some preliminary analysis arising from the workshop on Asian Studies that was held in November 2019. While the results are mixed across the sector, our preliminary work suggests that there has already been a decline in language program offerings, particularly Indonesian. On the positive side there has been an increase in the establishment of Asia-focused research centres, and policies from state-governments that in many respects take up some (though certainly not all) of the ideas set out in the Australia in the Asian Century white paper (2012).

Given the potential for rapid changes in the sector over the coming months, we would like to invite members to contact us in regards to the following:

- threats to jobs (whether academic, professional or casual) in Asian studies programs, language programs or libraries at Australian universities
- reductions to subjects, programs, faculties or schools that relate to Asian

Asian Studies

- the impact on students, particularly research students in Asian Studies or affiliated programs

Please feel free to contact [us](#) in this regard

We also wish to reaffirm our support for innovative programs such as the [Australian Consortium for In-Country of Indonesian Studies \(ACICIS\)](#), which has established itself as a leader in the area of student exchange programs to Indonesia. Covid-19 has placed enormous pressures on organisations like ACICIS to survive. Urgent government and university support is required to ensure that institutions like this can weather the crisis and operate again once travel becomes possible. The future of student exchange programs to Indonesia depends upon such support.

We acknowledge that this may also be a time of change and transition for Asian studies, as Australian universities rethink their engagement in the region. More than ever, there is a need for Australian universities to show support and generosity to international students, particularly those from the region, and to welcome them back to campus once distancing restrictions and travel restrictions permit. We reiterate our [earlier statement](#) against racism and affirming the importance of Asian Australians and people from Asia to our university communities and Australian society more broadly.

The ASAA is committed to representing the interests of its members and support for Asian Studies. We encourage you to stay in touch through some of our initiatives commencing in the next month, such as our [webinars](#), [mentoring platform](#) for PhD students, and AGM (details to follow).

Melissa Crouch, Secretary (melissa.crouch@unsw.edu.au), and Edward Aspinall, President (edward.aspinall@anu.edu.au) – co-authors of a forthcoming report on “Trends in Asian Studies in Australia”

