

**INQUIRY INTO THE TEACHING OF ASIAN STUDIES AND LANGUAGES IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION: TERMS OF REFERENCE**

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In the Australian of May 6th, 1988, submissions were invited for the Inquiry into the Teaching of Asian Studies and Asian languages in Higher Education. The Inquiry constitutes a major review of Asian studies and Asian languages in universities and colleges of advanced education; it will form the basis of advice to government on future directions. In view of the importance of resources for teaching, the full body of the text is given below.

Submissions should be forwarded by 10th June 1988 to:  
Professor John Ingleson, Inquiry into the Teaching of Asian Studies and Languages in Higher Education, University of New South Wales, PO Box 1, Kensington, NSW 2033.

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**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Inquiry into the teaching of Asian studies and languages in  
higher education

Background

The Asian Studies Council (ASC) was established in 1986 to foster Asian studies and provide advice on Asian studies at all levels of education and in industry. The Government recognised in establishing the Council that Australia would need to acquire the skills to operate effectively in the Asian milieu if it is to benefit from economic developments in our region.

To date the Council has concentrated primarily on Asian studies and languages in schools. A number of surveys relating to schools have been initiated and projects on curriculum and materials development are being discussed with State Governments.

There is now an urgent need to relate the activities of the Council to higher education (universities and colleges - a separate inquiry will be conducted into TAFE colleges).

The present inquiry has been initiated during a time of debate and possible change in higher education generated by the Government's Green Paper. Any resulting changes to the way universities are run, for example in the areas of cost recovery,

will have an immediate impact on the way in which Asian studies are conducted and on the recommendations of this report. In seeking to review Asian studies, the Council welcomes the debate surrounding the Green Paper as opening out distinct possibilities for a more flexible and responsive structure in the area of Asian studies.

### Purpose

The purpose of the inquiry will be to review the current situation in higher education and define what changes are necessary in order to meet Australia's requirement for Asian studies into the next century. Emphasis should be placed on needs of industry in the area of Asian studies as well as higher education's role in creating an "Asia literate" society in Australia.

The Council would like to see a situation in which 5% of higher education students at any one time are involved in close study of Asian languages and cultures; in which those studies are primarily associated with studies in functional areas such as law, economics, engineering, etc., except where there is a clear necessity to produce Asian specialists such as for teaching and academic purposes; and in which higher education plays a leading role in informing the Australian public about Asia.

The inquiry has the support of the Minister for Employment, Education and Training and is expected to be the seminal work on Asian studies in higher education requirements for a considerable period to come.

### Scope

The inquiry will consider:

- \* Universities and colleges where Asian studies/languages are taught as a major component;
  - in full-time, part-time or distance studies courses
- \* At least some institutions where Asian studies/languages are not taught as a major component, but where it might be argued they should be taught, either to give adequate coverage or because other subjects are taught which should ideally be associated with Asian studies;
- \* All relevant background material, including:
  - the ASC National Strategy on Asian Studies
  - the ASC Industry Survey
  - the ASC Teacher Supply Survey
  - the ASC Survey on Curriculum Materials in Schools
  - previous reports such as the 1981 ASAA Survey and Auchmuty Report.

While the scope of the inquiry does not cover TAFE colleges there are a number of instances in which there is a clear relationship between TAFE courses and higher education courses. This relationship should be taken into consideration.

### Consultation

Besides extensive consultation with educational institutions (including their students), the inquiry members will consult with:

- Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training;
- Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC) and Australian Committee of Directors and Principals in Advanced Education (ACDP);
- Asian Studies Council;
- Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA);
- Australian Teachers Federation (ATF);
- Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association (FMLTA);
- Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI);
- Federation of Australian University Staff Association (FAUSA);
- National Board on Employment, Education and Training (NBEET);
- Business Council of Australia (BCA);
- Federation of College Academics (FCA);
- Bodies responsible for higher education in the States

and any other relevant organisation.

### Issues

The Inquiry will consider the following issues in the context of its wider purposes (namely, to define what changes are necessary to emphasise functional and economic needs as well as higher education's role in creating an Asia-literate society):

- \* language and studies availability by geographic region throughout Australia and whether Asian languages of economic and strategic importance (defined by the ASC as Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian/Malay in the first place, and secondarily Thai, Korean and Vietnamese) are adequately covered;
- \* whether there is currently an adequate balance between graduates, post-graduates and non-degree students;
- \* the role of research on Asian studies in tertiary institutions;

- \* whether higher education is contributing adequately to the curriculum and materials development needs in Asian studies and languages at all levels of education;
- \* integration of Asian studies/languages with other disciplines, and particularly whether there is currently scope for individuals to develop professional skills in areas such as business studies, law, economics, engineering, technology research and development, accountancy and natural sciences, while at the same time acquiring Asia-related skills, and if there is not currently sufficient scope, what arrangements would be most appropriate in order to provide such flexibility;
- \* appropriate aural/oral/written balance, i.e. proportion of teaching of various skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, with special reference to the practical needs of industry and other users in day to day conversational dealings with Asians. This would involve examination of a range of approaches to language teaching including the communicative approach and a critical examination of teaching methods and recommendations as to what is most appropriate regarding the range of circumstances that might be required (e.g. full courses for language specialists, short courses for business people, etc.).
- \* whether there needs to be a short-term skills development programme based on intensive methods of language teaching, and if so, how best this might be done, including through cost-recovery approaches;
- \* specific purpose language education, including pre- and in-service teacher training, purpose-designed intensive courses and distance education;
- \* whether it is desirable and practical for tertiary institutions:
  - to return to a system whereby languages are mandatory for entrance to certain faculties; or
  - to have Asian languages as part of a common first year course for all university and college students.
- \* whether it is desirable to have a key centre or number of key centres of excellence in Asian studies, or whether such centres would tend to limit the scope of Asian studies;
- \* whether it is desirable to establish a national languages institute to serve the immediate needs of government and industry, and if so, what should be the nature of the institution, including:
  - based on an existing or a new institution

- single or multi-campus
- Asian studies as well as languages
- degree of cost recovery
- effect on existing institutions;

(Note: the Council envisages that such an institute might have the following functions: production of language specialists to meet the needs of government and industry, master language teachers, interpreters carrying out research into teaching methodology and curriculum/materials development, formulation and maintenance of standards.)

- \* ways of tapping, during the development of courses and programmes, the existing language and culture skills of those Australians with Asian backgrounds;
- \* the most effective means of handling character-based languages;
- \* effectiveness of current Asian studies/language programmes. Criteria for measuring effectiveness might include some or all of the following:
  - standard of language skills attained in a given time and language retention
  - student retention rates
  - where appropriate, utility of products of courses in terms of employer needs as defined, for example, in the ASC's survey of employer requirements
  - adequacy of in-country training provisions (the "language environment");
- \* any other issues which the Steering Committee considers relevant to the purpose of the study as set down above.

#### Arrangements

The study team will consist of a Steering Committee and a Research Directorate.

The Research Directorate will consist of a Research Director who should be a senior academic and several research workers, plus secretarial support. In addition, it is envisaged that the Research Director could commission additional research from specialists as required (this would be particularly relevant the area of linguistics). Support services will be provided and would include:

- \* secretarial and office services
- \* office accommodation
- \* financial management
- \* travel support
- \* provision of meeting venues

- \* document acquisition and library assistance
- \* report preparation and publication.

The Steering Committee will consist of eight persons, including the Research Director and a member of the ASC. The Executive Director of the ASC or his nominee and the Research officer will be invited to attend all meetings of the Steering Committee as observers.

It will be the responsibility of the ASC member of the Steering Committee and the ASC observer to liaise between the ASC and the Steering Committee in order to ensure that the views of the ASC are known to the Committee.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for the final document. The Committee will meet at least three times:- at the commencement of the study for briefing and to set the general direction; after six months to consider an interim report; and after eight months to consider a final report.

The Final Report will be submitted by the Steering Committee in draft to the ASC for comment by the ASC. The Steering Committee should be prepared to consider any views put forward by the ASC. Final responsibility for the Report will, however, rest with the Steering Committee.

The role of the Research Director and Research Workers will be fully acknowledged within the Report, but copyright will be vested in the Crown. Similarly, copyright relating to any individual research commissioned by the Research Directorate will be vested in the Crown.

