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**Faculty of Asian Studies: 1993 Report to Council.**

**1. Housekeeping.**

**1a. Student and staff numbers.**

As in immediately preceding years, student numbers rose and staff numbers declined.

Undergraduate numbers rose from 651 to 723 (an 11% increase)

Postgraduate student numbers rose from 52 to 78 (a 50% increase).

There were two further retirements and two resignations. Dr. Mason retired at mid-year but with characteristic generosity stayed on in an honorary capacity to see his honours students through second semester. Professor A.H. Johns retired after 30 years as foundation Professor, in which he established both the Indonesian and the Arabic programs.

Professor A.C. Gerstle and Professor B.J. Terwiel also said goodbye to the Faculty. Professor Gerstle took up the position of Professor of Japanese at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and Professor Terwiel holds the position of Professor and Head of the Department of Languages and Culture of Thailand and Laos in Hamburg University.

The conjunction of rising student numbers and staff losses led to severe and intolerable overcrowding in some classes (up to 30 students per tutorial in first year Indonesian).

**1b. Finances**

Due to past funding problems and the cost of a proportionately large number of early retirements, the Faculty was obliged to draw up, in consultation with the Business Manager's Office, a three-year plan of savings to acquit its debt to the University. This meant that throughout the 1993 teaching year resources were very tight and we appeared to have a long way to go before breaking even.

**1b. Student performance.**

Despite the inadequate staffing referred to above, this was a year of notable student achievement.

The year-in-Asia program was expanded through setting up further exchange agreements with Asian universities. Faculty students continued to cope well with this demanding program, in which they must spend a year attending university courses in their discipline at the same time as adjusting to a different way of life and learning to

operate functionally in a foreign language. On the other side of the exchange, we were delighted by the excellent results achieved by our Japanese exchange students who spend a year with us, and have the same problems with English as our students do with Japanese. Our special tutor, Mr. Collins, deserves much credit here for the work he does to ensure that these students have a rewarding year both academically and personally.

Two China Centre students won first and second prizes in the National Chinese Eisteddfod in May, and Japan Centre students won first and second prizes in the A.C.T. speech contest as well as winning a large number of government and private scholarships awarded in Japan.

Faculty Graduate Lisa Macdonald's success in taking out third prize in an international speech contest in Malay (organised by the University of Malaya) in competition with native speakers, was an outstanding achievement that received wide press coverage.

These are impressive and heartening achievements, and vital to the case to be made in our Quality submission that we can bring our students to a standard not attained elsewhere. But we regard it as essential to provide a good learning environment for *all* students, not just the élite. This was extremely difficult in the circumstances referred to above, and we wondered whether the emergency measures taken would prevent disaster in the areas most affected. The end of the year brought good news: wastage rates remained surprisingly low, an average of 6% in the Asian History Centre, 4% in the China Centre, 5% in the Japan Centre, and 7% in the Southeast Asia Centre. Only the South and West Asia Centre had a higher rate of 16%, with the small classes producing some statistical distortion. These figures are a tribute to the dedicated teaching and pastoral care given by staff, particularly those in charge of the large first-year classes in the Asian History, Japan and Southeast Asia Centres. It should be pointed out that our degree offers a real challenge to students, many of whom come from school without ever having studied a foreign language, let alone an Asian language, and sometimes without even a set of grammatical concepts. Neither are they exclusively from the top few percent, as in the case of Law students. This is therefore a particularly creditable record in a difficult year.

The Faculty's graduate program continued to be very active, despite loss of staff. For instance, four Ph.D. degrees were awarded, and a number of other theses were submitted (the success of these is now known, but will be recorded in the 1994 report). Dr. Jeffcott coordinated the course East Asian Studies 1 for the East Asia graduate program.

### 1d. Staff performance.

1993 was also a year of achievement for staff. The Faculty not only overcame the problem of dysfunctionally large language classes, it also began rebuilding its coverage on Asian society. A new course on *Technology, Innovation and Society* was introduced by Dr. A. Vervoorn, on secondment from DEET, and met with a very positive response from students. The Faculty was also greatly assisted by the generosity of Professor Kerkvliet and Dr Marr, from RSPAcS, and Professor Terwiel, now of Hamburg university, who gave advanced units on Vietnam and Thailand respectively.

As will be apparent from the reports of the individual Centres, Faculty staff continued to produce innovative teaching materials despite teaching long hours and/or large classes. The Thai program for instance ran two externally-funded projects to produce Thai language teaching materials, in Distance Education and Multimedia Computer-assisted Learning.

Faculty staff in the Indonesian and Japanese programs also taught the new LIFT (Language in Service for Teachers) program for A.C.T. teachers. Dr. Backhouse chaired the Advisory Committee, and as the first year progressed it became clear that the program filled a long-standing need very well.

Finally, staff published five books in 1993, a remarkable achievement in a small understaffed Faculty.

## 2. Faculty Review

1993 saw the first review of the Faculty of Asian Studies since 1979. This was a catalyst for the process of rebuilding the Faculty, which was in fact begun before additional funding was made available.

A notable feature of the Review process was the high level of student involvement and the outstanding student submission that resulted. The Faculty is grateful to its students for the positive and constructive way they responded to this opportunity, despite the substantial decrease in course offerings and increase in class sizes which they had been forced to endure.

The Review Committee recommended that the Faculty maintain but not increase its present range of languages. It also recommended that it restore its badly-depleted offerings on Asian history and society to achieve a 50/50 balance between language and non-language teaching. An increased coverage of contemporary Asian society was seen as a high priority. To make this expansion possible, the Review Committee

recommended extensive re-staffing, including two Chairs and a substantial number of other posts, wherever possible as joint appointments with other parts of the University with an interest in Asia. Changes in degree structure were also recommended.

To increase coordination of the study of Asia across the University, the Committee recommended the setting-up of a small high-level University Asia Committee, and the appointment of an executive/liaison officer. Another measure recommended to increase synergy across the University was the setting up of University-wide coordinating centres for different Asian countries. Building on the Faculty's outstanding achievements in language teaching, joint initiatives with Modern European Languages in the further development of advanced technology were seen as mutually beneficial. Strong emphasis was given to the need to ensure that the internationally outstanding library collection be protected against further erosion due to funding constraints. Finally, the Committee recommended that the Faculty be housed in a new building.

In its response, the Faculty accepted the broad outlines of the Review report though with some modifications in certain areas. It also suggested some further initiatives, such as expanding the Faculty's links with the University of Canberra, particularly in the areas of education, journalism and tourism, and its links with ITA and the Australian National Gallery to build on Canberra's existing strengths in Asian art.

The University moved swiftly to implement the Review Committee's recommendations. The University Asia Committee was set up, the contract for a new building (housing Asian Studies, Modern European Languages and Linguistics) was awarded after competition to the firm of Pegrum Ciolek, and late in December, when it was known that the Vice-chancellor's submission to DEET concerning ANU funding had been successful, approval was given to advertise the Chairs and other posts.

### 3. Other matters.

To honour Professor Johns' retirement, an international conference, *Transmissions in Islam*, was held at the ANU in September. Professor Johns subsequently became a Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

Finally, the Faculty expanded its research interests: the China Centre hosted three externally funded research staff, and the ARC project on economic change in the middle and upper Mekhong, directed by Mr. E.C. Chapman and Dr. Peter Hinton, is now located in the Southeast Asia Centre/ National Thai Studies Centre.

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In conclusion, 1993 was a stressful, hand-to-mouth year in which resources were stretched to the breaking-point. It was not smooth sailing and I admit there were a few rough edges, but hope that the Council is as pleased as I am with the results of efforts made to save the situation in teaching, with research output, and with the contribution made by Faculty staff, students, and the university as a whole to the Review process.

Ann Kumar.