

Internationalisation of the curriculum

Some practical issues

"Internationalisation of the curriculum" is one of the strategic goals of the University of Tasmania. A "global perspective and intercultural competence in their professional lives" is one of the generic attributes that our courses are expected to provide to our students. Yet just what an internationalised curriculum might look like and how it would be delivered seems unclear. Should *every* School be expected to provide a global, intercultural dimension in *all* the disciplines it teaches? Or would it be more efficient and practical to develop specific internationally-oriented units and experiences as a resource which students of all disciplines could access? In the case of the latter option, what kind of collaborative mechanisms could be set up between schools and disciplines to allow the process to work?

Initiatives in the School of Asian Languages and Studies

I won't attempt answers to these weighty questions here. Hopefully such issues may be taken up by the new working parties on various aspects of internationalisation soon to be established. Instead, I'd like to review several initiatives in international learning currently in practice in the School of Asian Languages and Studies, which may be of interest to others. These include single semester units in one Asian language and its culture: in-country summer programs in language and culture, the involvement in Asian language classes of international students who speak the target language, and the setting up of one-to-one language partnerships between Australian and international students.

Short practical programs in language and culture

In 2001, the School introduced, in addition to its established language majors, single semester, 3 hours-a-week units in an Asian language and its culture. Japanese was taught in this mode in 2001 and 2002 and Chinese in 2003. The focus is on spoken language, and everyday social interaction and cultural practice. The units are ideal for those wishing to learn about another language and its culture, but with limited room in their degree structure. With their practical focus, these units complement the more descriptive, analytical approach of our subjects in Asian Studies, which are likewise open to students from all disciplines.

In-country summer programs

There are intensive programs in Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian languages held each summer in the respective countries, where students undertake units which earn credit towards their UTAS degrees. At present these units are available only to students who have already studied the language for one year. But beginning in 2005 a new unit will be taught in Shanghai, combining beginners' level Chinese language and society with additional non-classroom activities focussing on business or art. Students of Commerce, Law and Fine Arts are likely to be particularly interested.

Involvement of international students

The Japanese program draws extensively on contacts with Japanese nationals studying English in Tasmania. These students are invited into Japanese language classes where they assist the Australian students, and gain skills in teaching Japanese as a foreign language. A language exchange program operates whereby Japanese students and Australian students pair up to exchange free tuition in their native languages and learn about one another's culture. Additionally, participation in Japan-related activities taking place in Hobart is included as an assessable part of their studies for Japanese-language students.

Looking forward

We are working on various fronts to provide accessible, internationally-oriented units to all students on campus, to assist local students to experience life and learning in other countries, and to bring together international and local students in ways that are pedagogically productive, and also personally enriching and fun.

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