Synopsis

The Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies (ACICIS) is an innovative national educational partnership involving collaboration between 21 member universities in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands, working with a broad range of partner universities in Indonesia. Via ACICIS students from any member university may enhance their educational experience through in-country studies in Indonesia. Options extend well beyond simply studying Indonesian language, and include unique programs in Islamic business, Arts, a Journalism Professional Practicum, a supervised Field Study semester, together with regular courses taught in Indonesian across all disciplines at our partner universities.

A non-profit consortium, ACICIS has the very clear and specific objective of maximising opportunities for Australian students to undertake quality semester-long, in-country study at Indonesian universities, credited to their home university degree. ACICIS provides an academically rigorous, organisationally streamlined, and pedagogically sound mechanism for the coordination, implementation and reflexive evaluation of such in-country study.

Instead of individual universities expending considerable (scarce) staff time and resources in an effort to manage Indonesia placements for their own students, through ACICIS these universities collaborate in offering a well-supported common conduit for their students to study in Indonesia. ACICIS employs a dedicated Australian academic as Resident Director in Indonesia to provide pastoral, academic and administrative support for students. The quality of ACICIS study programs is a powerful endorsement of the benefit of collaboration above competition. By working together, drawing upon Indonesianist skills in universities across the country collectively, ACICIS provides the best possible experience for students from around Australia, irrespective of their home university.

The Consortium was established to overcome the substantial linguistic, academic, bureaucratic, and immigration impediments that had prevented Australian students from undertaking credited semester study in Indonesian universities. Prior to ACICIS, virtually no Australian student had ever undertaken such study.

With the support and collaboration of organisations such as the Myer Foundation, Australia-Indonesia Institute, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, International Centre of Excellence in Asia-Pacific Studies, and a variety of Indonesian community organisations, ACICIS has now facilitated more than 1100 student-semesters in Indonesian universities with participants from more than 30 universities since 1995. Anonymous end-of-semester surveys of student satisfaction are routinely in the high 90s with some semesters achieving 100% satisfaction levels. Endorsements by hundreds of past students attest to the life-changing impact of the ACICIS experience in enhancing student learning, building new cross-institutional social networks, and fostering intercultural understandings, while optimising career trajectories.

1. Distinctiveness, coherence and clarity of purpose

ACICIS was established as a unique non-profit organisation at Murdoch University in 1994 by Professor David Hill. With some Federal government ‘seed funding’, a national consortium of universities was formed with the specific aim of overcoming the hurdles faced by Australian students wishing to study in Indonesia. ACICIS is now the largest consortium of its kind in Australia, with 21 member universities. Through this innovative, integrated multi-university partnership, Australian students undertake unique short summer-school, semester-long, or year-long studies at Indonesian institutions with a minimum of frustration and delay, and with comprehensive academic and pastoral support ‘in-country’ from an Australian academic Resident Director. ACICIS enhances Australia’s people-to-people engagement with one of its nearest and most important neighbours by providing Australian students with the best possible educational experience in Indonesia, in a safe, secure and supportive environment.

Why study abroad? The June 2008 Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper noted that ‘to benefit both domestic and international students, higher education institutions need to focus on
internationalising the delivery and content of courses.' Identifying ‘concerns about the extent to which Australian students study in another country,’ amongst its three specific strategies, it advocated ‘more opportunities for students … to undertake offshore activities, including study abroad and internships.’

Why study in Indonesia? In a 2007 paper for the Lowy Institute, Professor Emeritus Jamie Mackie of the Australian National University wrote: ‘It is very much in our national interest to achieve the closest possible degree of engagement with Indonesia at the people-to-people level […] so close educational links and other cultural exchanges will be of special importance here.’

The ACICIS educational partnership responds positively to both the concerns that students need improved opportunities for overseas experiences and direct knowledge of neighbouring countries, by offering social and academic engagement in a study abroad experience in Indonesia.

With more than a decade’s experience in Indonesia, ACICIS prides itself on providing the highest quality and safest possible in-country program for participants. The ACICIS program is continuing to expand and grow into a world leader in the provision of educational opportunities at Indonesian tertiary institutions. It sets the benchmark for improving student satisfaction, motivation, and performance through participation in study abroad programs. The quality ACICIS programs has been recognized by international universities which are now joining the consortium. Having recently accepted two non-Australian universities (SOAS, London; Leiden) as members ACICIS is preparing a strategy to attract international institutions, by initiating cooperation with key organizations such as the Consortium for the Teaching of Indonesian and Malay (COTIM) in the USA, and in Europe the European Association for South East Asian Studies (EuroSEAS) and the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies (NIAS).

ACICIS’ structure

ACICIS is a comprehensive collaborative partnership of Australian and international member universities, who agree to abide by the ACICIS constitution and pay a small annual membership fee. Member universities include the Australian National University, Charles Darwin University, Curtin University of Technology, Deakin University, Flinders University, La Trobe University, Leiden University (Netherlands), Monash University, Murdoch University, University of Adelaide, the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London, UK), University of Melbourne, University of New England, University of New South Wales, University of Queensland, University of Sydney, University of Tasmania, University of Technology Sydney, University of Western Australia, University of Western Sydney, and University of Wollongong.

Each member university nominates a Contact Person who liaises with ACICIS, disseminating information, and actively encouraging and supporting students to participate in the various ACICIS study options. Regular communication with the Contact People is maintained via email, telephone, and occasional visits by ACICIS staff. ACICIS’ policy is set by the governing body, or Reference Group, convened at least twice a year. Current members are senior Indonesianist scholars from the universities of Murdoch, NSW, Flinders, Queensland, Melbourne, Curtin, ANU, and Sydney.

ACICIS’ Founder and Consortium Director is Professor David Hill, who is assisted by the Deputy Consortium Director, Associate Professor David Reeve of the University of New South Wales. Professor Hill concentrates on policy direction and overall supervision of the consortium, while Professor Reeve focuses on liaison with stakeholders and development of new study options. Professors Hill and Reeve work part-time for ACICIS. Hosted by Murdoch University, the ACICIS Secretariat is staffed by one full-time and two part-time staff. The Secretariat handles all ACICIS administrative activities in Australia dealing with matters concerning students past and present, the ACICIS website, and promotional materials and activities.

3 See www.chio.edu/COIIM, www.euroseas.org, and http://niass.ku.dk/
ACICIS has an office in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, staffed by a full-time Resident Director (currently Dr Philip King, a former ACICIS student from the University of Wollongong), and an Administrative Officer. The Resident Director is crucial to the effectiveness and success of the Consortium, by providing vital oversight of all aspects of in-country operations, including security and risk assessment. The Resident Director is the Australian Embassy’s ‘area warden’ for Yogyakarta, liaising with Embassy security officers and staff, with the Indonesian host universities, local police and security organisations, and accessing a variety of other informal local sources. The effectiveness of these networks has enabled ACICIS to maintain ‘in-country’ programs safely since 1995.

Crucially, the Resident Director provides an initial three to four day live-in Orientation program, where incoming students – usually between 20-30 in number -- are provided with extensive arrival assistance and counselling, on academic and personal matters, including everything from toilets to terrorism. Students also complete all immigration and registration requirements, and (if relevant) take Indonesian language placement tests. For the initial weeks in-country students are allocated an English-speaking volunteer local guide from the local student community, who helps them to settle into life at an Indonesian university. Students also have a personal tutor for their first semester.

ACICIS continually reviews and improves all its procedures. These include a comprehensive risk management plan, which has been developed to maintain the security of all participants. ACICIS believes that a key preventative strategy for the minimisation of security risks is for ACICIS staff and students to engage positively with the local community, to build effective, supportive networks of friends, neighbours and colleagues, to insulate and protect from antagonistic, opportunistic targeting in the event of broader political or anti-social tensions. In providing information to students, their home universities and their families, ACICIS presents a balanced and considered assessment of what is sometimes a fluid security environment. The Resident Director (and the Secretariat) monitors developments in Indonesia with specialist attention, communicating with the Australian Embassy’s Security section. With an extensive network of contacts, both official and unofficial, from which he draws security information, the Resident Director liaises with relevant staff in Indonesian partner universities concerning the security environment. For example, contingency arrangements exist for the provision of ‘safe house’ accommodation if required. Maintaining these information networks, and keeping students informed, using a variety of means throughout the semester, is an important part of the Director’s job.

Prof. John Ingleson, DVC (Academic and Enterprise) at the University of Western Sydney, writes ‘On two or three occasions in the past decade when local events have caused concern about Australian students’ welfare in Indonesia, ACICIS has handled these issues in a thoroughly professional manner, in large part because it has a full time Australian Director in country and has a Board whose members know that country well. Universities have complete confidence in ACICIS and the judgement of its in-country Directors’ (Appendix 1).

Study options

ACICIS currently has study options at six universities in Indonesia. They are:

- **Gadjah Mada University** (UGM) in Yogyakarta. New students (whether beginners, intermediate or advanced) usually spend their first semester at UGM. They can study at the Indonesian language centre, do regular ‘immersion’ subjects alongside Indonesian students in any UGM faculty, or a mixture of both. They choose their own areas of study from a very broad range of subjects.

- **Muhammadiyah University** (UnMuh) in Malang. Advanced language students conduct fieldwork on a subject of their choice, presenting a 10,000-word academic report, and one-hour presentation, all in Indonesian (Appendix 2). Previous research (by more than 180 students) has been on subjects as diverse as the apple industry in East Java, sex education in high schools, a recent environmental disaster, the Indonesian transmigration program, an Islamic political party, Indonesian women’s obsession with having white skin, traditional medicine, Muslim women’s fashion, the illegal trade in turtles, micro-credit cooperatives, lesbian women in Yogyakarta, access to education for lower socio-economic groups, Javanese wedding ceremonies, and press coverage of Indonesian separatist movements. The ACICIS website currently houses fifty-five (55) of these reports (http://www.acicis.murdoch.edu.au/hi/fieldrep.html).
- **Indonesian Arts Institute** (ISI) in Yogyakarta. Advanced language students study arts subjects alongside Indonesian students. Subjects have included photography, dance, traditional music, etc.
- **Indonesian Islamic University** (UII) in Yogyakarta. Students study Islamic Business taught in English. Subjects may include an internship placement at an Indonesian business. ACICIS believes that it is crucial for Australia to understand more clearly the business and cultural environment of the Islamic world, including Indonesia (Appendix 3). In the past the Australia-Indonesia Institute ($2,000), and currently ACICIS ($1,000), offer one scholarship each semester to participants in this study option.
- **Atma Jaya Catholic University** (AJ) in Jakarta hosts the Journalism Professional Practicum (JPP). This summer-school includes two weeks at Atma Jaya University studying Indonesian language, culture and media studies, and a four-week internship at an English language media outlet. After a competitive entry process 25 participants undertook the JPP in January-February 2008. ACICIS believes that the positive experiences these young ‘opinion-makers’ have in Indonesia will be reflected in their future writings, potentially changing public opinion about our nearest neighbour.
- **Yogyakarta State University** (UNY) in Yogyakarta offers advanced language students an integrated program for (intending or current) Indonesian language teachers, incorporating classroom experience in an Indonesian school, together with pedagogy and theory units and/or a thesis component at the university.⁴

ACICIS is committed to introducing new study options that will greatly broaden the opportunities for international students to study at Indonesian universities. Our development strategy has identified three growth areas; short summer-school courses, courses that are taught in English, and courses that offer internships at Indonesian businesses and NGOs. For example, following the huge success of the Journalism Professional Practicum in early 2008, ACICIS is investigating the concept of a Development Studies Professional Practicum. With appropriate financial support, this could be offered as two options: firstly, as a semester-long option in Central Java, where students would gain intermediate level Indonesian language skills, together with a three-month internship at a front line development NGO; secondly, as a six-week, competitive-entry, summer option based in Jakarta to enable participants to gain basic level Indonesian, and a headquarters experience at a local or international aid organisation. These unique experiences would make students employment-ready, and help Australia provide much needed trained personnel in the area of development aid. Indonesia is a particularly apt location for such a program since Indonesia is the biggest recipient of Australian aid (of more than $458 million in 2007/2008).

ACICIS is currently exploring an International Relations semester (in English), and summer programs in Environmental Studies, Islamic Law and Tropical Architecture. The process of planning and developing such new study options is substantial, involving initial assessment of future viability, soliciting input from Australian member universities, selection of suitable Indonesian host/partner university, discussion of draft curriculum and format, revision of curriculum and academic evaluation, development of promotional materials and publicity, distribution of materials to member universities and enrolment in the pilot offering. A rigorous evaluation of that pilot offering must follow. As an example, ACICIS began initial discussions for the Islamic Business semester a full two years before the pilot semester was offered, and it is regularly reviewed.

ACICIS is also investigating the possibility of linking ACICIS programs to the Indonesian government's recently expanded *Darmasiswa* scholarship program for foreigners. The original *Darmasiswa* program offered select international undergraduate students a modest financial package of support including tuition fees, visa costs, and a small monthly stipend. The Indonesian government has announced a substantial expansion in this program, from 500 students in 2007 to 10,000 students in 2015. This is a clear recognition by the Indonesian government of the value of international educational partnerships, such as ACICIS.

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2. Influence on student learning and student engagement

The program's influence on student learning and engagement is evidenced in direct and indirect ways through ACICIS' impact on the overall student experience of higher education. The program's scaffolded approach ensures that acculturation occurs in a supportive environment, particularly in the first months in which cultural shock is likely to be experienced. The Resident Director's pedagogical and pastoral strategies and the initial peer mentoring guarantee the best possible level of student engagement. The changes to student's learning and engagement through being immersed in Indonesian culture are observed by the Resident Director who provides them with feedback and opportunities for discussion and review during the semester and at its conclusion, in de-briefing. In particular, students learn to question stereotypes and see from the 'other's' perspective, to communicate cross-culturally, to appreciate difference without conflict. The participants develop long-term friendships as these intercultural partnerships are formed between individuals who are functioning in an everyday bi-cultural context. They are not about 'niche, national interest (trade/security) servicing.' For ACICIS student Adelle Neary (UAdeleide), who is currently working for a law firm in London, her 'ACICIS experience gave me a better understanding of people and my place in the world; it has left an indelible imprint on my life.' The program conceives educational attainment broadly and understands that educational partnerships include localised networks that build support within groups and between individuals to build more nuanced understandings of their respective cultures (Appendix 4).

The ACICIS program is open to all: past ACICIS participants have included undergraduate students, language teachers, honours students, international participants, and private individuals. Participants normally remain enrolled at their home university and have their semester or year abroad credited to their degree. In UNESCO's International Year of Languages, ACICIS is proud that past students have gone on to graduate amongst the best foreign speakers of Indonesian in the world and are becoming leaders in their fields. ACICIS student Ulla Keech-Marx (ANU), who is now an AusAid representative in Eastern Indonesia, believes that 'My ACICIS year gave me invaluable insights and understanding that have fundamentally shaped who I am and what I do for a living.' The above sentiment is commonly expressed among former ACICIS students (see details below).

ACICIS encourages students to learn both through academic scholarship at university and, equally as important, by immersing themselves in everyday Indonesian life and opening their minds to the many wonders of this richly diverse nation. This notion is reflected in a comment made by ACICIS student Jessica Dunn (UTS), who is currently using a travelling scholarship to do an internship at an Indonesian NGO. Jessica says that 'ACICIS changed my life, opened my eyes and broadened my mind.'

In the typical ACICIS semester group, the majority of students are young Australian undergraduates. There are several mature age students, the occasional honours or postgraduate student, two students from European universities, and sometimes a student from the USA. One thing that unites them all is fervour for all things Indonesian, and the desire to interact with Indonesia and its people. It is telling that wags in Indonesia have re-interpreted the ACICIS acronym as Aku Cinta Indonesia, Cinta Indonesia Sekali (I love Indonesia, love it a lot). As students from universities all around Australia, the UK and the Netherlands join together on the ACICIS program, an esprit de corps builds. They share their knowledge and experience, and develop an awareness of the 'state of field' of Indonesian Studies and the international possibilities for graduates.

Student engagement in community and charitable activities

Indonesian people rarely get the chance to talk with a westerner because foreigners normally do not take the trouble to learn their language. So, when an ordinary Indonesian talks to an ACICIS student it is often the first time that they have spoken to a westerner. In such a situation ACICIS students are unofficial ambassadors for Australia and, conversely, when they return to Australia they become ambassadors for Indonesia, promoting further engagement and dialogue between our two countries.

ACICIS provides the support and encouragement for students to make small but significant contributions to community activities in Indonesia. In early 2005 an ACICIS student assisted the Australian Embassy as a translator during the early stages of the Tsunami relief effort. Over recent semesters ACICIS students have volunteered to help Australian Education International outreach programs based at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. They go to Indonesian regional universities and help to provide assistance and training in skills such as interview techniques and academic preparation for Indonesian staff and students who are applying for scholarships to Australian universities. Every semester ACICIS students volunteer, for example, to teach English to Indonesian school students, work with street children, assist local NGOs, join local and university clubs, hold art and photographic exhibitions, attend church, and help out at local orphanages. Because of their ability to speak Indonesian, local newspapers, magazines, radio, and television stations often seek out and interview ACICIS students. The students present a more realistic and accessible face to the Indonesian public, rather than the exaggerated portrayal of the West in Hollywood movies, or the often stilted portrait presented in the Indonesian media. ACICIS student Sianni Mathews (ANU), who is currently doing a PhD on Malaysia-Australia relations, reflected that ‘ACICIS gave me invaluable cultural and social understanding and taught me so much more than just Indonesian language.’

ACICIS does not require students to participate in charitable activities, but we do encourage and actively support students who wish to do charitable work, and occasionally ACICIS as an organisation supports a particular charitable initiative. For example, in recent years ACICIS and its students have worked on the following projects:

- **The Lestari Widyastuti Scholarship (2008).** In late 2007, long time ACICIS employee in Indonesia Ms Lestari Widyastuti died unexpectedly at a relatively early age. The ACICIS alumni ‘family’ donated more than $9,000 to set up a scholarship in her name, to pay the annual tuition fees for an Indonesian undergraduate student from a lower socio-economic background, attending Gadjah Mada University. The scholarship, in perpetuity, will continue to honour the memory of our friend Lestari Widyastuti.

- **Yogyakarta earthquake appeal (2006).** On 27 May 2006 a devastating earthquake struck Yogyakarta, killing more than 6,000 people, destroying more than 120,000 houses, and leaving 600,000 without shelter. ACICIS students and staff responded immediately, eventually raising approximately $30,000, which was spent purchasing aid for the victims. Working with other small groups, the ACICIS students organised their own emergency response to direct aid to those who had seen little official assistance - taking food, medicine and other much-needed supplies to more remote villages in the province. Students who had previous medical experience were some of the first on the scene to help the many injured and traumatised people at the city’s overflowing hospitals. Students’ language skills, local knowledge and personal contacts acquired over the semester helped them facilitate the quick and efficient distribution of aid on a small scale, and provide assistance to larger NGOs and aid organisations such as AusAID. Their timely and energetic response to the disaster has been praised by the Australian and Indonesian governments and also in various news media (Appendix 5).

- **Library donation to Gadjah Mada University (2005).** ACICIS, in cooperation with Murdoch University, accepted a large collection of books on Indonesia from a private donor in Australia. Qantas generously transported the books to Indonesia and they were placed with Gadjah Mada University.

- **Aceh Tsunami relief funds (2004).** ACICIS helped to raise money and coordinate relief supplies for Aceh, from the Yogyakarta area. One ACICIS student raised almost $4,000 collecting donations at a Bunnings store in Perth, and the money was transferred to ACICIS in Yogyakarta to buy supplies.
• **Health and wealth from waste (2004).** The then ACICIS Resident Director in Yogyakarta and students assisted with the foundation of an innovative recycling project in Sukunan village near Yogyakarta.

• **Becakathon (2003 and 2007).** A becak is an Indonesian cycle pedicab. In 2003, ACICIS students raised just over $2,000 by taking over the role of the driver of several becaks for a day, for a donation from each participant. The funds were distributed to three orphanages, a community radio station, a street children’s organisation etc.

There are at least two meaningful measures of the success of student learning on ACICIS programs: the level of personal satisfaction expressed in their anonymous evaluation of the experience, and the level of academic results achieved by the students.

**Student survey evaluations**

ACICIS operates a rigorous evaluation process, using a tight feedback loop, based on a one-semester turnaround. Every semester students provide very detailed feedback through an anonymous, online, end-of-semester survey developed with the assistance of Murdoch University Teaching and Learning Centre staff. The results are compiled by the ACICIS Secretariat into a report (of approximately 30 pages), which is circulated unedited to the Reference Group and the Resident Director. The results are analysed, evaluated and discussed by the Reference Group, which recommends appropriate action and revision strategies as required. ACICIS also uses feedback from the surveys to provide up-to-date information to new students on topics such as accommodation, financial arrangements, subject choices etc. ACICIS believes that one of the best sources of information for new, incoming students is the experience of the outgoing students.

Since the inception of the online surveys in 2002, ACICIS has kept comparative records of student responses. These provide comparison of overall and individual performance over time, and to enable review and improvement in performance. An example is Table 1 below, which quantifies students’ responses to a question on the overall worth for students of a semester in Indonesia. Given the very complex and challenging nature of in-country studies, ACICIS student satisfaction rates (‘Excellent’ and ‘Satisfactory’) are exceptional -- usually in the high 90s and sometimes at 100% -- providing clear evidence of students’ regard for ACICIS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2002</th>
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<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>Semester</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>87%</td>
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<td>82%</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. ACICIS online general survey, Question 17 - Overall worth of semester in Indonesia.*

Such positive student responses represent a continuing endorsement of the quality of the programs offered by ACICIS.

**Student results**

ACICIS students are generally high achievers who attain above average grades during their studies. For example, the table below is an example of a typical semester. It is derived from the official Indonesian university results received for the 37 students enrolled in Semester 2, 2007. Thirty students took language

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6 These can be seen at [www.acicis.murdoch.edu.au/forms](http://www.acicis.murdoch.edu.au/forms)
and immersion subjects at UGM, two conducted field study with UnMuh, four studied Islamic Business at UII and one studied photography at ISI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Immersion</th>
<th>Field Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. *ACICIS student results (Semester 2, 2007).*

The *Not Available* result, which was unusually high in this cohort, was due to the unusual circumstances of three particular students. All three had to return home sick and did not complete their studies in Indonesia. However, while the Indonesian university recorded a ‘fail’, ACICIS worked closely with students’ home universities to ensure the students were separately and independently assessed academically, avoiding them being disadvantaged due to illness. (All ACICIS students receive both an academic transcript from the Indonesian host university as well as a detailed Student Evaluation Report from the Resident Director, contextualising their studies and assessing their overall engagement with the local social environment.)

**Student numbers**

In the 27 semesters since ACICIS’ first cohort in 1995, this educational partnership has enabled 856 students (many staying two semesters) from 33 universities to undertake semester studies in Indonesia. Table 3 below includes students taking full-semester study options, over the past three years.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
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<th>26</th>
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Table 3. *ACICIS student numbers for the last 6 semesters*
3. Breadth of impact

ACICIS has had widespread demonstrable benefits for participating students and, through them, for the community in general. In the sub-section we provide evidence, firstly of the evaluation of the impact of ACICIS by individual students, then evidence of the value of ACICIS in the eyes of government and community leaders.

Numerous studies have identified the study abroad experience as providing what Bilash and Kang refer to as ‘opportunities for increased awareness, horizon-broadening, and personal re-calibration.’ Our observation of the ACICIS experience concurs with Shin’s assessment that ‘Cross-cultural experiential education works on mental, physical and emotional variables’ stimulating ‘developmental and personal change as the learner matures.’

One of the recurring themes in the ACICIS student surveys is that the ACICIS experience has been ‘life-changing’. In writing to thank ACICIS, many former students have provided unsolicited glowing endorsements, some of which we have included in a PowerPoint recently placed on the ACICIS website, (http://www.acicis.murdoch.edu.au/hi/alumni.html) e.g.:  
- Jennifer Robinson (ANU – currently a Rhodes Scholar completing a Doctorate in Law at Oxford University) – ‘ACICIS is a wonderful program and gave me opportunities that shaped the course of my life so far.’
- Simon Nichols (UTS – currently completing a Masters in Journalism) – ‘It was one of the most fascinating and insightful times of my life.’
- Deanne Whitfield (Curtin – currently a features editor at The Jakarta Post, Indonesia’s most prestigious daily newspaper) – ‘ACICIS paved the path to my future.’
- Sunny Sanderson (UQ – currently doing a research Masters on hybrid gibbons in Central Borneo) – ‘ACICIS laid the foundations for all the work I’ve done in Indonesia and Malaysia.’
- Clare Harvey (ANU – currently working for the Asia Foundation in Jakarta concentrating on Islam and development programs) – ‘Through the ACICIS experience I gained understanding that I will use throughout the rest of my life.’
- Dylan Quinnell (AucklandUT – currently just finished a speaking tour in New Zealand on his work with World Vision in Acheh) – ‘ACICIS was an awesome experience that has literally changed the direction of my life, leaving me a lot more inspired and knowledgeable.’

These examples provide evidence too of the considerable contribution that ACICIS alumni are making in their community, in a diversity of career trajectories. In general, ACICIS alumni are high achievers, and ACICIS strongly believes that a quantitative longitudinal graduate analysis would support personal evidence that ACICIS alumni are contributing significantly in well-placed positions within government, business, university, NGO, teaching, and diplomatic fields.

Former ACICIS students are proud to be known as ‘anak ACICIS dalam keluarga besar ACICIS’ (ACICIS kids in the big ACICIS family). The ACICIS Friendster web page is even named Keluarga ACICIS (the ACICIS family). This feeling of family, of connectedness, is very strong in the ACICIS alumni group. It comes from the shared and very similar positive experiences of all ACICIS students in Indonesia. To provide a service and information to the alumni group, ACICIS maintains a page on the ACICIS website with alumni biodata, and an email list (currently with 447 members). The email list is used regularly to send out information such as current jobs in Indonesia, and Indonesian cultural events in Australia. There are ACICIS pages on Facebook, Friendster, Slideshare and YouTube.

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The fact that 21 universities have maintained their membership of ACICIS is one indication of the value they see the partnership provided for them. Put simply, it enables their students to have access to quality semester programs in Indonesia without each university having to maintain and administer specialist programs. UTS Deputy Vice Chancellor (International), Prof. David Goodman, has emphasised ‘the extent to which ACICIS has had widespread benefits for students and staff of both UTS and other universities in Australia’ (Appendix 6). University of Western Sydney DVC (Academic and Enterprise), Prof. John Ingleson praised ACICIS as ‘a wonderful model for inter-university cooperation.’

More generally, within the wider community, ACICIS has received endorsements from government, educational, and academic leaders, testifying to the broad beneficial impact upon the Australian community. Over the years public recognition of, and support for, ACICIS has come from many different quarters:

- In 2002, when Prime Minister John Howard visited Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, he met with ACICIS staff and students, presenting a token of acknowledgement to our 500th student.
- The 2002 Asian Studies Association of Australia Report Maximizing Australia’s Asia Knowledge: Repositioning and Renewal of a National Asset praised ACICIS as an example both of ‘Australia’s long-standing commitment to the study of Indonesia’, and of ‘what can be achieved with limited, but carefully directed funds, spent by experienced, motivated people.’
- In 2004 the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade of the Australian Federal Parliament released a report on Australia’s relationship with Indonesia, noting ‘it is extremely important that Australian students are given the opportunity and encouragement to study in Indonesia. Australian students who do so ultimately enrich not only their own but Australia’s expertise and understanding of Indonesia and the Indonesian language. As young ambassadors for Australia, they also send a strong signal of our interest in Indonesia, and through their interactions, present opportunities for Indonesians to increase their understanding about Australia and Australians.’ (p.162) The Report strongly endorsed ACICIS recommending that the Commonwealth Department of Education ‘provide an annual grant to the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies, for running and salary costs’ (Recommendation No. 20, p.163).
- The Australia-Indonesia Business Council described the ACICIS Islamic Business semester as ‘an important initiative’ since ‘Programs such as this will enhance long term business, religious and cultural understanding between Australia and Indonesia’ (letter 3 March 2005).
- In a 2007 paper for the Lowy Institute Australia’s pre-eminent scholar of Indonesian Studies, Professor Emeritus Jamie Mackie of the Australian National University, also emphasised: ‘The part played by ACICIS, the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies, in arranging for more and more Australian undergraduates to spend a substantial period of study at an Indonesian university has been a valuable new initiative, but it needs (and deserves) much stronger financial backing.’
- In his March 2008, 3-part SBS documentary ‘Indonesia: A Reporter’s Journey’ senior Australian journalist Mike Carlton, interviewed half a dozen ACICIS students at their Indonesian campus cafeteria (Appendix 7). Carlton instinctively recognised the great value of the experience in Indonesia to the students and to Australia more generally, asking ‘Why don't other Australian kids do it?’, before adding ‘I thought there'd be millions of kids up here by now.’ ‘There should be!’ was the students’ swift response. They elaborated that government funding cutbacks affecting Indonesian language teaching in our schools and universities meant there was just not enough encouragement for young people to learn the language and less for them to go to Indonesia to perfect it.
- The Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Mr Bill Farmer, in opening the Journalism Professional Practicum in Jakarta in January 2008, told participants that ‘through this extremely interesting and important program’ they would experience ‘the reality that more Australians need to know about’

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(Appendix 8). He hosted a concluding party at his home for students, Indonesian media personalities, government, and embassy officials. Embassy staff also provided students with a security orientation, and the Embassy’s Public Affairs section hosted one of the participants.

- The Australian Foreign Minister, Mr Stephen Smith, recently wrote to ACICIS that ‘We greatly appreciate the work carried out by the Australian Consortium for ‘In-Country’ Indonesian Studies (ACICIS) to facilitate ‘in-country’ Indonesian studies.’ He noted particularly that ‘ACICIS and the Australia Indonesia Institute recently cooperated very successfully when running journalism internship and Islamic Business Scholarship programs in Indonesia.’

- In recent years ACICIS has received competitive financial support from the Myer Foundation’s ‘Beyond Australia’ program, the Australia-Indonesia Institute of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and the International Centre of Excellence in Asia-Pacific Studies (ICEAPS). However, additional, on-going funding is required for ACICIS’ long-term development and growth.

ACICIS support for member universities

Membership of ACICIS greatly benefits all universities in the partnership. Even before a student arrives in Indonesia, ACICIS provides both staff and students with a rich array of information about the educational experience.

ACICIS has an extensive, user-friendly, data-rich website www.acicis.murdoch.edu.au, which is the primary means of promoting ACICIS and providing information to prospective participants. It includes 203 web pages, almost 2,000 image files (mostly JPEGs), 43 photo albums sent to ACICIS by students, 55 research reports from the Field Study option, 81 PDFs, 64 Word documents, links to 38 articles written by ACICIS students and published in Inside Indonesia magazine, 5 spreadsheets, and 3 MP3 files. At present ACICIS is working to include on the website more interactive multimedia content, including PowerPoints, video clips and Google Earth place markers.

As a measure of the community value of the ACICIS website, the number of visitors often exceeds 700 people per day. In February 2008, 224 visitors stayed on the site longer than one hour. As the table below illustrates, the number of visitors per month to the ACICIS website ranks it the fourth most visited site hosted by Murdoch University servers. The table below shows data for February 2008.

| 121,551 | MAIS student login |
| 71,674 | Library |
| 24,292 | Webmail |
| 18,037 | ACICIS |
| 14,967 | Teaching and Learning Centre |
| 8,245 | School of Veterinary Sciences |
| 6,584 | School of Law |
| 4,160 | School of Education |
| 1,185 | Division of Arts |

Table 4. Murdoch University website visitors for February 2008.

In addition, ACICIS endeavours constantly to improve and update its information and resources to support member universities by encouraging Australian students to study overseas, producing a wide variety of promotional material including: flyers, brochures, small magazines, posters, and pre-departure booklets for commencing students; CDs detailing student accommodation options; informational DVDs, short video clips for the ACICIS website, and sites such as YouTube and Facebook; and photo collections provided by students, for use in promotional materials.

13 See www.insideindonesia.org
4. Concern for equity and diversity

Access, inclusion and diversity

ACICIS does not discriminate against, and actively supports and encourages, people who have special needs or disabilities. ACICIS makes certain that maximum assistance in the way of pastoral care is available from ACICIS in-country staff if needed. ACICIS monitors student progress and well being, with special attention to the provision of extra-curricular and social activities within the ACICIS and local student community. ACICIS regularly receives applications from people with physical or mental conditions, such as bipolar disorder, Crohn's disease, diabetes, asthma, serious allergies, and depression etc. None has been refused entry to the ACICIS program on these grounds.

Families with children and single parents regularly participate on the ACICIS program. ACICIS has always given them additional assistance in seeking out appropriate housing, providing information and assistance with enrolling children in local schools or playgroups, and has petitioned for special consideration from member universities in cases where the demands of family have disrupted study in Indonesia for single parents. ACICIS provides detailed information for participating family members and about children's schooling options on the website. Gay and lesbian people have experienced no known problems on the ACICIS program.

ACICIS is also helping to break down discriminatory barriers in Indonesia. For example, the 2006 Academic Guidelines at Gadjah Mada University (UGM), in common with other Indonesian universities, state that a student must not possess any physical disability that would hinder their study. As a consequence, students in wheelchairs are not enrolled, and there is no wheelchair access. In 2007 ACICIS faced this problem head on when we accepted an Australian student who was legally blind, being unable to read printed words and requiring assistance on occasion for mobility. He was the first blind student to attend UGM, since such disabled students were not previously enrolled. ACICIS helped with finding suitable accommodation conveniently accessible to campus, and other services; arranged for the provision of helpers; worked with lecturers, local publishers, and the Disability Services Unit of the student’s home university to provide reading materials in advance for conversion into electronic formats; and arranged special exam sittings. The student successfully completed his semester in Indonesia.

ACICIS has always been committed to minimising costs for students to maximise the numbers who are able to study in Indonesia, ensuring it is accessible even to those from lower economic backgrounds. Therefore enrolled students simply incur a HECS liability for their ACICIS semester as part of their usual university fees. In addition, ACICIS encourages member universities to provide financial support to participants and has occasionally been able to provide modest scholarships, including support from the Australia-Indonesia Institute (DFAT).

ACICIS does not keep data on the ethnic composition of participants. However, an indication of their background and linguistic diversity is given by the fact that the 30 applicants for the 2008 Journalism Professional Practicum reported language proficiency (to at least intermediate level) in Indonesian (5), Spanish (4), Japanese (3), French (3), Mandarin (2), Italian (2), Arabic (1), Portuguese (1), Cantonese (1), Kannada (1), Afrikaans (1), German (1).

The majority of students who participate in ACICIS highlight the benefits of the program as distinctive in terms of the life-changing experiences that this in-country study affords. ACICIS student Luke Arnold (UMelbourne), who is currently doing a Master of Laws at the University of London, reinforces this conviction in saying that it is 'a cliché but its true: my time on ACICIS changed my life, opened my eyes and broadened my mind.' Partnerships are two-way and successful in forging mutual understandings between individuals through academic learning and interactive encounters with Indonesian people in their diverse communities. ACICIS is distinctive on the grounds that it not only cultivates partnerships at the institutional level to create shared values and an ethos of reciprocation, but it also develops educational partnerships at a relational peer-to-peer level. 'ACICIS is,' in the words of UWS Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor John Ingleson, 'an exemplar of cooperative endeavour by Universities.'