Bridges to the Future
Strengthening Australia-Korea Student Mobility, Research and Education
The Australia-Korea Business Council (AKBC) has prepared this report in consultation with its members and key stakeholders. It aims to use this inaugural paper on Australia-Korea International Education to help bring attention to this important area of the bilateral relationship.

The Australia-Korea Business Council is the leading national body committed to strengthening the Australia-Korea economic relationship. We exist on behalf of our members to deepen economic and cultural ties by connecting businesses, communicating opportunities and championing mutually beneficial policy and outcomes.

Established in 1978, the AKBC promotes two-way trade and investment with Korea through economic cooperation, dialogue, and cultural understanding. Our counterpart in Korea, the Korea-Australia Business Council (KABC) was established in the same year, and we maintain a close relationship through our annual AKBC-KABC Joint Meeting.

The AKBC is chaired by the Hon. Simon Crean and led by an Executive Committee of outstanding industry and government leaders. We have a diverse membership base that includes government, business and academic institutions, all with wide-ranging interests in Korea. As one of Australia’s largest bilateral trading partners and regional allies, development of deeper cultural and economic ties with Korea is of great importance for the coming decades.
Background

Bridges to the Future
Strengthening Australia-Korea Student Mobility, Research and Education

This report has been drafted during an important period in the bilateral relationship between Korea and Australia. In recent years, there has been momentum built in the strategic relationship between Korea and Australia, being enhanced to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in December 2021.

The increasing cultural, strategic and industrial engagement between the two countries must also take into account the importance of education in building and fostering key interpersonal and inter-institutional links. Comprising key representatives from education institutions, industry bodies, and government, the AKBC education subcommittee has led the production of this report. It highlights the possibilities and shortcomings that both countries must carefully approach to ensure substantive, long-term relationships are built and sustained.

The AKBC’s Education Subcommittee, chaired by Professor Kent Anderson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global of University of Newcastle, held its inaugural meeting in September of 2022. There, members and other key stakeholders provided feedback to a draft discussion paper. This has shaped the final report, providing the basis of the AKBC’s policy position on education, accentuating the bilateral opportunities and areas in need of attention in the sector. Through this paper the AKBC aims to stimulate constructive discussion in the education sector to scope issues and begin to formulate a coordinated and strategic approach to building professional, educational and cultural bridges between Australia and Korea.

akbc.com.au
Introduction

In an increasingly globalised world, education has quickly become a key element of engagement between people from across the globe. As such, the growing demand for international education presents enormous opportunity for countries like Australia, which is home to some of the most educated workforces in the world and is renowned for its high-quality educational institutions. It is worth noting that for the purposes of this paper, ‘education’ is treated as a combination of the Vocational Education and Training sector (VET) – which includes TAFE – and higher education (universities).

The economic opportunity education provides for Australia is immense. With the unprecedented modernisation of economies in Asia, international higher education is projected to be worth almost $160 billion by 2026. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it contributed $37.6 billion to the Australian economy and supported over 240,000 jobs. Having established itself as a cornerstone of Australia’s economy, education is vital for future growth and relevance as the world seeks to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

This opportunity is well-recognised by the current federal government. As the Education Minister Hon Jason Clare MP recently reiterated, international education is an “incredible national asset” that “emplo[y]s more people than mining or agriculture... and [is] our biggest export that we don’t dig or drill out of the ground - and that it brings with it more than just dollars”.

Importantly, the opportunity extends well beyond economics. International education strengthens Australia’s global standing and facilitates innovation in areas such as hydrogen and renewable energy, medicine, robotics, and artificial intelligence. It advances diplomacy by building new and enhanced bilateral and multilateral partnerships, and it produces Australian-educated alumni with a distinctly global outlook, suited to all levels of industry and government. Importantly, such alumni networks are essential to building the positive profile of Australian education that will help foster bilateral connections.

However, these economic, cultural and political benefits will remain out of reach if Australia fails to correctly navigate the landscape of international education in the years ahead. The impact of the pandemic on this sector cannot be overstated – since 2019, closed international borders has seen a $13.6 billion decline in Australia’s education sector, as international enrolments fell from 756,636 to 570,626.

Concentration of enrolments in competitor markets across all sectors, by country of origin, 2020

Source: Australian Strategy for International Education, 2021-2030
The pandemic also highlighted student mobility risks, illustrating how concentrating on only a few countries for inbound students may not be a sustainable model. In their recently released Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030 report, the Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment identified diversification as the central tenet that will drive Australia’s recovery in the sector. In 2020, the top five countries accounted for 72 per cent of enrolments – a substantial increase in concentration relative to 2010, where the top five accounted for 60 per cent. Today, both government and industry recognise that a diverse international student cohort can best mitigate such risks and ensure a wider variety of courses are undertaken.

**Australia’s Top 10 Education Export Partners by Enrolments 2018-2021**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>204,945</td>
<td>211,965</td>
<td>190,926</td>
<td>170,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>89,162</td>
<td>115,094</td>
<td>115,137</td>
<td>99,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>42,852</td>
<td>53,535</td>
<td>52,427</td>
<td>45,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>24,098</td>
<td>26,009</td>
<td>24,218</td>
<td>20,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>26,002</td>
<td>24,318</td>
<td>20,135</td>
<td>15,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>16,537</td>
<td>18,063</td>
<td>17,230</td>
<td>15,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>16,933</td>
<td>20,713</td>
<td>18,898</td>
<td>14,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>26,608</td>
<td>27,342</td>
<td>21,531</td>
<td>14,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>10,449</td>
<td>17,327</td>
<td>17,290</td>
<td>14,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>21,767</td>
<td>21,141</td>
<td>18,246</td>
<td>13,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>479,353</strong></td>
<td><strong>535,507</strong></td>
<td><strong>496,038</strong></td>
<td><strong>425,295</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment

NB: For January-July 2022, Korean enrolments in Australia were 11,807, ranking it 13th by enrolments.
Strengthening Australia-Korea Student Mobility, Research and Education

Courtesy of a range of historical and socio-economic factors, Koreans are ideal international partners in Australia’s pivot toward diversification. Australia and Korea share a proud history of collaboration in education and enjoy a burgeoning economic relationship – already Australia’s fourth largest trading partner, Korea is also the thirteenth largest source of international students studying in Australia.

This latter figure may seem impressive, the fact that Korea was Australia’s fifth largest source country only six years ago demonstrates the potential that remains unrealised. As is well known, Koreans highly value education; it is not uncommon for families to uproot their lives and move overseas to provide the best options for their children. With the highest tertiary attainment rates for the 25–34-year-old age bracket, Korean spending on education is much higher than its OECD counterparts.

Further to this potential, both countries must recognize the strategic importance of enhancing bilateral education. Geopolitical uncertainty and climate change are two significant shared challenges facing both nations today, amidst which a natural complementarity between them has become increasingly apparent. Partnering in education and research is vital to combining Korea’s world-leading technology and industry (e.g., in EVs, secondary batteries, and green energy) with Australia’s critical mineral and energy resources – and in turn this is critical to long-term supply-chain security, international trade resilience, and achieving 2050 net-zero targets.

Moreover, as the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership entered into by both countries in 2021 noted, ‘enhancing people-to-people links’ is a pillar of strengthening the relationship over the coming decades. Education is an essential interface through which both countries can catalyse the channels and relationships which sustain the exchange of ideas, personnel and culture that form such links.

Two open and outward-looking nations, Australia and Korea’s position in the Indo-Pacific places them in an ideal position to capitalise on the growing demand for international education, collaboration, and their associated benefits. Deepening bilateral cooperation in education presents immense opportunity to strengthen these ties.

This paper identifies three key areas for Australia-Korea collaboration:

1. Enhancing opportunities for Australian students to study in Korea.
2. Developing pathways for Korean students to study in Australia.
3. Fostering greater research partnerships between Australia and Korea.
Mobility programs enable cross-border learning through student exchanges between partner institutions. Overseas educational experiences are seen by students and teachers as vital to equipping them with the skills they need for the jobs of the future. Enabling deep intercultural learning and creating global-minded future leaders, these programs forge strong collaborative relationships with Australia’s regional neighbours and the rest of the world.

Australians have long held a reputation for their eagerness to experience the world beyond their borders. In education, this has been supported by the New Colombo Plan. An initiative of the Australian Government designed to increase exchange in the Indo-Pacific region for Australian university students, the New Colombo Plan features both scholarships, a highly competitive award that delivers up to $69,000 in educational funding for the recipient; and mobility grants, a $3,000–$7,000 bursary to assist undergraduate students undertaking short-term international study through temporary exchange. Over 63,000 Australian students have been supported through New Colombo Plan scholarships and mobility grants since 2014.

New Colombo Plan students by destination (2014-2018)

Source: International Education Association of Australia
Korea’s educational reputation and cultural significance has increasingly positioned it as a valuable destination for Australian students and teachers. With Korea ranked as the sixth most popular destination for Australian students supported by the New Colombo Plan, there is a need to consider the program’s expansion and reciprocation from Korea. It is also worth examining why Korea is considered an ideal destination for study and what can be done to expand upon the opportunities already on offer.

An important element in Korea’s rise in global recognition is its cultural output. The “Korean Wave”, or “Hallyu”, encapsulates the surprising success of Korean film, TV, music and culture throughout Asia and the rest of the world since the 1990s. Spurred on in recent times with the arrival of the 2019 film *Parasite* and 2021 television show *Squid Game*, Hallyu encompasses a growing cache of cultural aspects including fashion, tradition, video games, cuisine, and language.

In combination with Korea’s remarkable industrial and political trajectory since the Korean War, this pop-culture presence has unsurprisingly led to increased interest in both studying, and studying in, Korea. This is especially true throughout Asia, where Korea is already seen as an attractive destination for whole-degree programs. The Korean wave has now also reached Australia; research by Korea’s Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) from 2019 showed that over 50% of Australians considered K-pop to be “quite” or “very” popular in their country.

The number of foreign students living in Korea steadily increased between 2014 and 2021, reaching an impressive 152,000 overseas enrolments in 2021 despite the pandemic reversing this upwards trend. Considering Korea’s proximity to Australia (relative to Europe and North America) and similar time zones, it is the ideal destination for a student seeking high-quality overseas education who does not want to feel too far removed from home.

The desire to study in Korea starts on Australia’s shores, with local universities increasingly offering in-depth Korea-related courses. Coursework examining Korean language, politics, literature and translation, film, and history has existed since the 90s, but only recently has it shifted to more established institutions. These include the Australian National University, the University of Sydney, Curtin University, the University of Queensland, Monash University, the University of Western Australia, the University of Melbourne, and the University of New South Wales.

Expanding upon these programs and widening their availability is the first challenge to address to enhance the opportunities for Australian students to study in Korea. Increased exposure to the Korean culture and history, as well as making students more comfortable in their handling of Korean language, will certainly translate to an increased uptake in Australians considering Korea as an overseas study destination.

Furthermore, these courses would enjoy a higher conversion rate if they focused on the more practical aspects of Australian students studying in Korea. Greater attention should be given to why Korea is a suitable location to pursue a career by reviewing available internships and short-term work placement options.
Another roadblock that must be overcome is the perception that South Korea is unsafe due to the ongoing tensions with North Korea. Whilst the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) acknowledge the two nations are technically in a state of war, they immediately concede that military exchanges are rare. Their official advice for travel to South Korea does not even mention these tensions, instead focusing on South Korea's strict rules regarding the pandemic.

Finally, helping students overcome the fear of culture shock is a necessary step towards advancing our two nations’ educational ties. Moving to a new country is intimidating at the best of times, and this is only heightened when transitioning from an English-speaking to foreign-language country.

**AKBC Korean Cultural Training Programs**

The AKBC offer pre-departure training to students and teachers who are set to study and work in Korea, covering the nuances of Korean society and culture and offering practical advice on how to handle things like accommodation, banking, and visa registration.

Being able to build cultural awareness and share tips and tricks on how best to adapt to life in Korea is our best bet at assisting students deal with their concerns that might otherwise prevent them from taking the plunge and studying in Korea.


Deepening collaboration between Australian and Korean institutions for mobility and exchange programs will have profound economic, social and cultural benefits for both our nations. To achieve this, the AKBC puts forward the following measures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote existing and encourage new exchange agreements and degree articulation arrangements between Australian and Korean institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand opportunities for Australian educators to share knowledge and expertise with staff from partner universities, colleges and vocational educational institutions in Korea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for joint degree programs – rather than only exchange agreements – between Australian and Korean institutions to strengthen links in a more holistic way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist Australian institutions in coordinating and co-hosting regular offshore and online events, including guest speakers, master classes and alumni award competitions in Korea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for the inclusion of exchange and mobility provisions in regional free trade agreement negotiations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CASE STUDY

Griffith Asia Business Internship (GABI) program

The Griffith Asia Business Internship (GABI) program set within the Griffith Business School at Griffith University provides 6-week, unpaid full-time internship placements with industry partners across seven destinations in the Asia-Pacific region, including South Korea. This interdisciplinary global Work Integrated Learning (WIL) course has been in operation for five years under the leadership of the Griffith Asia Institute (GAI) and is supported by New Colombo Plan grants from the Australian government. GAI aims to expose students to Asia by developing cultural, political, and economic understanding and awareness.

GABI is a 20 credit-point course designed to foster personal connections and professional networks across the Asia-Pacific region encouraging all students, independent of discipline to become Asia capable. GABI is central to the curricula and is providing opportunities for all undergraduate and postgraduate students, independent of discipline, age, nationality, socio-economic background, or degree. In 2019, this included students with disability, age ranges from 17 to 55 years as well as students with either little or extensive professional work experience. Opportunities to engage with Asia continued throughout COVID by pivoting to remote placements in 2020 and 2021 with host organisations across four destinations, including South Korea.

Remote placements had further breadth with a focus on digital capabilities, authentically navigating the new world of work and increasing employability to bolster graduate success by including comprehensive online cultural activities, language classes and industry events. As highlighted by Joshua Kim, a Master of Business Administration student who did a remote GABI with Trade and Investment Queensland (TIQ) in Seoul in 2020: “I enjoyed the opportunity to utilise the knowledge that I have gained from my MBA study and previous workplaces, to assist a Queensland exporter with a business expansion opportunity. Overall, the Remote Global Internship was a much better experience than I originally thought.”

Well-established membership and industry partnerships, including with key Australian government agencies including the Australian Chambers of Commerce, business councils, and TIQ, play an important role in developing sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships that build each year and allowed the pivot to remote in 2020 and a re-pivot to again offer in-country placements in 2022. Griffith Alumni in country and the corresponding networks are involved in finding suitable placements and connecting students to the foreign culture and country. Reciprocal, alumni enjoy re-connecting with its alma mater and staying in touch through people-to-people connections. As highlighted by Rowan Petz, Executive Director of the Australian Chamber of Commerce in South Korea: “I really commend Griffith University for all their work within the Australia-Korea educational space. It is great to see that Griffith is one of the most engaged Australian universities here in South Korea and we have been successfully working with the Griffith Business School to support the Global Internship Program since 2017”.

12
In 2022, the interest in GABI in South Korea has skyrocket with more students and industry partners than ever interested in being part of the program. As emphasised by Dr Andrea Haefner, the Lead of GABI:

“IT is great to see the increasing interest both by students and companies in deepening people to people and business relations between Australia and South Korea and adding to the growing and deepening bilateral relationship”. This is aligned to the long-term focus on GABI on diplomacy, creation of networks and cultivating Asia-capability in future leaders. Long-term outcomes for students are better prospects for employment as they gain essential soft skills, including cross-cultural communication and digital capabilities skills as well as a thorough understanding of the importance of Asia for Australia’s economy. In some cases, students gained employment with the company or were recommended to branches in Australia. Long-term impacts on the industry include well-trained and resilient graduates as well as ongoing connections to the next generation of leaders.

Overall, GABI provides successful networks and new opportunities for individuals, their companies, and the university by strengthening people-to-people relationships in South Korea and beyond. To find out more about the Griffith Asia Business Internship (GABI) program, go to: https://www.griffith.edu.au/asia-institute/global-wil-internships

Credit: Dr Andrea Haefner, Griffith Asia Institute
The benefits of developing pathways for international students to attend Australian universities, colleges and TAFEs is well documented. The university sector alone generates over 160,000 (240,000 prior to COVID-19) fulltime equivalent jobs in Australia, and through the COVID-19 pandemic it has become clear that many of these are dependent on the presence of international students.

International students also contribute a great deal to the domestic learning experience. Enhancing every student’s cultural understanding, they illuminate different ways to tackle problems, affirm the benefits of multiculturalism and make a rich contribution to campus life. They can also be an important source of skilled labour, diffusing these benefits amongst Australian workplaces and creating a global-minded workforce that can solve the challenges of tomorrow.

In the year 2021, 18,640 enrolments were received from Korea to study at Australian institutions, with VET receiving the most enrolments, taking 59% of the share, followed by higher education (26%), ELICOS (9%), schools (5%), and finally non-award programs (1%). At the end of 2021, 13,868 Koreans were studying in Australia. Pre-pandemic, this figure was as high as 28,000, representing one of Australia’s top five largest cohorts for international students. Understanding what Australia is doing right to attract these numbers – as well as the steps that must be taken to ensure they keep rising post-COVID – is crucial for solidifying the educational ties between the two nations.

Australia’s strength in international education is also closely linked to the country’s unique visa settings. Eligibility for work rights can also act as a potential pathway to residency, which is an important motivating factor for globally mobile students. Australia’s Student and Temporary Graduate Visa programs have been a huge success, currently enabling the temporary stay of approximately 145,000 international students.

### Type of Visa held by international graduates currently working in Australia by year of course completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Course Completion</th>
<th>Permanent Resident</th>
<th>Temporary Graduate Visa (subclass 485)</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 2013</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Strategy for International Education, 2021-2030
Strengthening Australia-Korea Student Mobility, Research and Education
The preceding graph demonstrates the importance of Temporary Graduate Visas to those international students. This is especially pertinent when considering Korean international students, for whom VET programs remain the most popular sector when studying in Australia, with 11,774 students currently enrolled. The working holiday maker program is a significant pathway to VET; over half of the Korean students enrolled in VET have previously held a working holiday or visitor visa.

Given that VET education is a pathway to migration, maintaining Australia’s rigorous post-study work rights – as well as the quality of Australia’s VET institutions – should be considered a top priority to continue attracting Korean international students. Furthermore, with the Korean government placing a greater emphasis on vocational training, there are opportunities for Australian institutions to partner with Korean vocational colleges to host government-funded global field trips (consisting of tailored training followed by internship placements).

Australian institutions must also continue to engage with Korea’s top ‘SKY’ universities to establish partnerships and collaboration, noting that SKY is a term used to denote what many consider to be the top three universities in Korea: Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University. As an example of existing partnerships, the University of Sydney’s strong ties with the prestigious SKY universities offers an incentive for Koreans to study in Australia. Many Korean students believe that the quality of their future depends on them attending one of these institutions, reflecting Korea’s culture of academic elitism alluded to earlier in this paper.

Studying at the University of Sydney offers a second chance at attending a SKY university for those students who failed to gain entry upon completing high school. With exchange programs in place for all three universities – as well as the highly respected Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) – Korean students can enrol in an undergraduate degree in Sydney, before returning home to a SKY university as part of an exchange program. This experience can bolster their resumes and assist these students in Korea’s highly competitive job market.

Additionally, the Australian lifestyle, defined by its warm weather and an abundance of world-class coastline, is appealing to many Koreans. As a safe, English-speaking country, these factors all amount to Australia being perceived as a relaxed and safe destination to relocate. Despite all this, Australia continues to lag behind other countries when it comes to attracting Korean international enrolments, with the United States accepting over half of all outbound Korean students.

This begs the question of what can be done to raise Australia’s international education profile on the global stage. Whilst Australia’s limited promotion of their universities to Korean students (particularly in comparison to the US and Canada) goes a long way in explaining this disparity, the solution goes beyond simple marketing. The handling of alumni relations is a major factor determining a country’s ability to attract Korean students. US based Korean alumni have a strong presence, and hence, US study options are always front of mind for Korean students considering overseas education.

Efforts to profile Australian universities in Korea are therefore crucial in developing their reputations and the reputation of Australian education as a whole. For example, in 2021 the NSW Government hosted an exclusive alumni dinner in Seoul, recognising the achievements of Korean-based individuals who attended education institutions in NSW. Designed to foster business ties between the two countries, alumni of Charles Sturt University, Macquarie University, University of New South Wales, University of Sydney, University of Technology Sydney and Western Sydney University were in attendance. Whilst this represented a step in the right direction, Australian universities must act to establish and support alumni networks for potential Korean students to see. The recognition of Korean alumni of Australian institutions must become a priority in order to attract Korean students.
Ultimately, attracting Korean students to Australia needs broader solutions in a highly competitive space. While Australia’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic through its successful pivot to online learning mitigated some of the constraints placed on international students, the country now risks falling behind. The ‘Fortress Australia’ approach which protected the health of people has seen international students, eager for a return to face-to-face learning, look to alternate destinations.

Inbound Korean student mobility to Australian institutions is therefore at a critical juncture. It is vital to ensure that learning content and delivery is aligned with students’ needs and these courses create a supportive learning environment for international students. Similarly, universities need to ensure that they aptly empower and prepare Korean students to be leaders in the global workforce.

Through working collaboratively with Korea and utilising a student-centric approach, Australia can significantly improve its value proposition across the international education sector. The AKBC puts forward the following measures to achieve this for consideration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide more attractive visa advantages over competitor international education destinations such as the United States, United Kingdom and Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the range of programs to provide services to students, support professional readiness and mitigate the impacts from cultural barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist Australian institutions to establish Offshore Learning Centres in Korea to provide an on-campus experience to students undertaking online learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage Australian institutions to embed ‘work integrated learning’ in their courses to offer international students the opportunity to get hands-on experience to supplement their academic learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer international students the opportunity to commence their studies at home and then to choose between having an immersive learning experience in Australia or continuing to study online (in conjunction with the establishment of Offshore Learning Centres).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That Australia institutions build and leverage alumni networks to raise the profile of their alma mater in Korea and the international education sector overall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively encourage employers to provide in-program placement opportunities and on-shore post-study work opportunities for new international graduates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop links with these non-traditional players through partnering with education technology (EdTech) companies to enhance and broaden online delivery models for Korean students wanting to study in-country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showcase Australian tertiary and VET institutions at international education trade fairs in Korea and promoting the Australian sector through a strong and unified voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Australian universities understand how to promote themselves to Korean students, including the translation of promotional materials into Korean language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are growing ties between Australia and Korea in the battery materials and new energy spaces. They leverage Australia’s vast natural reserves and Korea’s capabilities as a manufacturing powerhouse. So, it’s not surprising that there are also growing educational links between our two countries that relate to lithium-ion batteries.

One example is that of Mr. Donghyuck Park. Donghyuck first visited Australia on a working holiday, travelling across the continent from east to west. He was impressed by the University of Melbourne while on a sight-seeing bus, making a mental note that it looked like a great place to study. Seven years later, Donghyuck is now a University of Melbourne PhD student, working on a research project sponsored by the Future Battery Industries CRC (FBICRC), a new member of the AKBC.

Donghyuck was raised in Seoul and attended Seoul National University of Science and Technology (Seoultech), where he attained his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in manufacturing systems and design engineering. He has very fond memories of his time at Seoultech.

While at the University of Melbourne he has met several other Korean PhD students from the engineering and information technology faculties and enjoys interacting with them. He also enjoys talking with other researchers, including at departmental colloquiums which he finds to be more relaxed than what he had experienced in Korea. He has found that Australian professors, postdoctoral researchers and doctoral students seem to engage in discussions on a more equal basis – something he believes can lead to great research outcomes.

While university life has been relaxing and the people cordial, Donghyuck found it hard to secure accommodation early on in his studies. He notes that in Korea, staff members often help you find accommodation, but this is less common in Australia. He recommends that Korean students studying in Australia try to secure accommodation in a school or a private dormitory rather than in a backpacker hostel.

Regarding the relative advantages of studying in Australia compared with the US or UK, Donghyuck believes that Australia is less well-known among Korean students, but nonetheless has its advantages. Firstly, his arrangement came with an FBICRC secured scholarship for 3.5 years - more than what was offered by US universities. Secondly, he believes Australian universities really value their relationship with Korean universities and Korean students – something he considers to be extremely important.

He also believes Australian students would have a great experience studying in Korea. He reminds us that Korea has numerous competitive universities, many at the top in their disciplines. Studying in Korea provides opportunity for students to experience cutting-edge technologies, but with the added benefit of lower living and tuition costs. Also, while Melbourne has its trams, Seoul has an extensive public transportation system. He suggests Australian students jump on board a sight-seeing bus in Korea - you never know where you will end up.

Credit: Donghyuck Park and Dr Rodney Thiele, Education and Training Manager, FBICRC
Fostering research partnerships between Australia and Korea

International research collaboration promotes diversity of ideas by providing multiple views, approaches, and ways of thinking. It enables access to specialised research expertise and facilities not available in any one institution or country. This is essential for academic and scientific progress, which in turn is essential to solving complex and challenging problems on a local, national, and international level.

However, research collaboration is not without its challenges. As many Korean academics are alumni of US universities, there is a natural tendency towards favourably regarding, and seeking, collaboration with institutions there. There is a need for more established processes and structures for collaboration. In the absence of such, questions of incentive, funding and personnel can stymie otherwise highly synergistic areas of potential partnership.

Australia’s weight in global research is well-recognised. This research excellence is embedded in the existing infrastructure within Australian universities and research centres, creating interest from international institutions and students who are drawn to high-performing, research-intensive environments. It is a critical enabling factor in creating opportunity for mobility and exchange programs.

But research funding has declined over recent years in Australia, with data suggesting the share of university expenditure contributed by public funding sources to be around 46 per cent for Australia, compared to an average of 69 per cent for the OECD as a whole. Korea on the other hand ranks above the OECD average in this metric. The consequences of this are clear – Korea has six institutions in Reuters’ 2019 top 100 most innovative universities rankings, while Australia has none. Whilst doing well in academic rankings, Australia can clearly learn from Korea in terms of how to better prioritise innovation.

In a sign that the tide might be turning, the Australian Government announced $1 billion in research support in its 2020-21 Federal Budget. Furthermore, in response to the recommendations outlined in the Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030 report, a further $10 million has been pledged to “support the international education sector to reach new markets [and] pilot innovative new products”. Coinciding with a gentle upward trajectory of research collaboration between Australia and Korea in recent years, this provides an opportune moment to deepen and fast-track excellence in joint research between the two nations.

Australian-Korean joint-research conducted by non-university institutions through government-to-government and industry partnerships constitutes another layer underscoring the rich opportunities for collaboration. In 2014, the CSIRO signed a memorandum of understanding with the Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KIST), pledging their dedication towards a mutually beneficial study into the potential of hydrogen as an alternative energy source. They have since devised a roadmap for implementing a hydrogen economy between the two countries, striving to produce 1,200 hydrogen refuelling stations by 2040 in order to achieve their shared goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.
Indeed, Australia and Korea have a solid history of joint research projects; both respective governments view each other as priority countries for science and innovation collaboration. Between 2015-2018, Korea was Australia’s 21st highest research publication partner, with Australia being Korea’s 7th highest collaborator in trailblazing research across a number of fields, with the top five being medicine, physics, engineering, biochemistry and material sciences. Annually, there are on average 850 co-publications by Australian and Korean researchers.

The strategic importance of these collaborative efforts is well recognised by both governments. In 2019, Australian and Korean Foreign and Defence Ministers committed to investigating a ‘Science and Technology Bridge’ to expand the research base between the two countries, particularly in the areas of hydrogen and renewable energy. Leaders of both countries welcomed the first Australia-ROK Tech-Bridge in September 2021, which supported strategic collaborative research partnerships in a range of areas, with the 2022 Tech-Bridge focusing on cooperation between the two nations’ space science communities.

In this vein, opportunities for increased collaboration will likely proliferate as the two countries look to one another to secure regional supply and production networks in defence, clean energy, and critical minerals. But both countries must make sure to provide substantive support and establish accessible systems that incentivise regular, sustained collaboration. Expanding funding schemes and initiatives like the Korea-Australia Research Network (KARN) is necessary to ensure these opportunities are pursued. Launched in 2019 after a joint-research project conducted by Australia’s Department of Education and Korea’s Ministry of Education, it remains the only network in Korea dedicated to promoting bilateral research.

Likewise, educational institutions must also continue to explore collaborative programs. In one such example from 2019, the University of Sydney and Korea’s Yonsei University agreed to match investment in joint research projects in space robotics, astrophysics, and quantum materials and condensed matter theory resulting in PhD student exchanges and collaboration. Australian universities should continue to build deeper partnerships with Korean universities, looking beyond SKY universities and exploring engagement with Korea’s impressive network of non-SKY and regional institutions.

Through forging stronger links between their research ecosystems Australia and Korea can create significant advantage for their international education sectors. There is therefore a need to press for establishing stronger, consistent structures for collaboration and ensuring the right people base exists between the two nations’ research communities. The AKBC puts forward the following measures to achieve this for consideration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widen avenues for international research collaboration, including short-term exchange programs for staff and research students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for greater business-led and government supported research programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Re)establish substantial joint-research grants for Korean-Australia research collaboration, providing more concrete and reliable structures for partnerships and collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce high-level scholarships for top-talent students wishing to study in Australia in areas of key interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster greater alumni support and networks that sustain a trusted bilateral network of research partners and personnel between the two countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance the opportunities and incentives for the Korean-Australian diaspora to engage in this bilateral space.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Korean Studies and Research Excellence

University of Melbourne

Since 2017, Korean Studies at the University of Melbourne (UoM) has been reinvigorated with funding from the Korea Foundation to appoint Associate Professor Jay Song to set up a programme. Since then, Korean Studies at the UoM has established four language (Korean 1-4) and another four non-language subjects as a Minor degree in the BA curriculum. Korean 1, for example, when it was first launched in 2019, attracted more than 500 undergraduate students. During COVID-19, student numbers had a minor impact, however, Korean Studies still has more than 600 students enrolled in its programme.

Korean Studies non-language subjects teach Australian students about modern and contemporary Korean history, political economy, society and cultures. One of them is a study trip to Korea, taking 15 Australian students to Korea during the winter term as an intensive subject for 2.5 weeks. 15 selected students are funded by the DFAT New Colombo Plan scholarships.

This study trip is so popular and highly competitive that in 2019, 181 students applied for only 15 seats. A/Prof Song leads various site visits to the South Korean National Assembly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Ministry of Unification and the Demilitarised Zone. Students also have opportunities to meet and discuss with North Korean refugees, labour migrants, comfort women, start-up IT company CEOs, K-pop trainees, local artists, and modern Hanbok designers.

UoM Korean Studies also runs Global Classrooms with leading universities in Korea, SKY: Seoul National University, Korea University and Yonsei University in a high-tech hybrid format with virtual reality. It will launch a Joint PhD Programme with Korea University on Korean Studies and Media/Communications from 2023.

In terms of its research excellence, with generous funding from the Academy of Korean Studies, the Korean Studies Research Hub was founded in December 2020. Since then, the Hub has attracted additional research grants from the Korea Foundation, the DFAT Australia Korea Foundation and the Australian Research Council. Its members are leading experts on Korean migration, media/communication, urban planning, business leadership and Australia-Korea relations.

Moving forward, the UoM Korean Studies will further open two more advanced Korean language subjects, Korean 5 and 6 in 2023, followed by a Korean Studies Major in 2024. UoM graduates with Korean Studies work in the areas of foreign affairs, governments, think tanks and media.

Credit: A/Prof Jay Song, Director, Korean Studies Research Hub, the University of Melbourne
Conclusion

This paper has been launched to help identify the core issues and opportunities that exist in bilateral education between Australia and Korea. As these two countries continue to grow closer together, there is a need to foster a people base that can allow fledgling relationships to develop.

Key to this is the role of education and a coordinated approach between industry, government, and educational institutions to ensure that bilateral engagement can be effectively facilitated. As this paper has noted, there are strategic and economic harmonies that provide a strong basis for expanding research partnerships and collaboration. In order for these opportunities to expand, so must people-to-people engagement – between students, faculty, alumni – to deepen ties, foster innovation, and ensure mutual prosperity for generations to come.

In raising these issues and discussing the cultural affinities and interests that Australia and Korea share, the recommendations in this paper suggest some of the concerted, strategic efforts needed to effectively advocate for enhancing bilateral education and research opportunities.

Acknowledgements

The AKBC would like to kindly thank the following for their support and feedback in developing this report:

- Austrade
- Australian National University
- Curtin University
- Deakin University
- Expert Education & Visa Services
- Future Battery Industries CRC
- Griffith University
- Group of Eight Australia
- Monash University
- QS
- RMIT
- Study Melbourne
- Study NSW
- StudyPerth
- Swinburne University of Technology
- TAFE NSW
- The Embassy of Australia in Seoul
- The Embassy of Australia in Tokyo
- The Government of Victoria
- Universities Australia
- University of Melbourne
- University of Newcastle
- University of South Australia
- University of Sydney
- University of Tasmania
- University of Western Australia
- Yonsei University

For further information

Australia-Korea Business Council
info@akbc.com.au
www.akbc.com.au

Please contact:
Strengthening Australia-Korea Student Mobility, Research and Education