



## The potential contribution of Asia-savvy graduates to New Zealand business and society



NEW ZEALAND  
ASIA INSTITUTE

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND





# Contents

Conference concept	2
Conference programme	4
Summary of keynote speech - Dr David Walker	6
<b>Session 1:</b> Where are the jobs for Asia-savvy graduates?	9
<b>Session 2:</b> How can Asia-savvy graduates create new opportunities for New Zealand businesses?	10
<b>Session 3:</b> What do Asia-savvy graduates value in their relationship with New Zealand?	11
<b>Session 4:</b> How can our universities enhance the Asia-savviness of students?	12
Student discussions and recommendations	13
Selected student essays	16

# The concept of Asia-Savvy: New Zealand Asia Conference 2011

Our student-led conference seeks to highlight and explore various options to maximise the potential contribution of "Asia-savvy" graduates to New Zealand businesses and society.

The conference is a forum for debate, discussion and dissemination of information concerning New Zealand's ever closer ties with Asia as an Asia-Pacific nation, especially as they are relevant to graduates and businesses, both in New Zealand and in Asia. The conference will be potentially held as an annual event.

The inaugural Asia-Savvy Conference in 2011 set out to bring together students from universities across New Zealand. Student participants were selected after they submitted a 1,000-word essay addressing one of the four conference themes. These themes are posed as questions:

1. Where are the jobs for Asia-savvy graduates?
2. How can Asia-savvy graduates create new opportunities for New Zealand businesses?
3. What do Asia-savvy graduates value in their relationship with New Zealand?
4. How can our universities enhance the Asia-savviness of students?

While the conference is intended to bring students together to discuss these questions, it is also intended as a forum for interaction with businesses and other thought leaders with interests in Asia. In 2011, sponsorships were sought from such businesses and organisations.

New Zealand is in the process of recognising a new generation of young leaders, most notably, those who are "Asia-savvy". We seek to deliver value by capitalising on this. Instead of taking a top-down approach, where "experts" are invited to lecture our participants, we are emphasising a process that is focused on students, in which a conversation is held between those students and experts to encourage the dissemination of knowledge among this generation of Asia-savvy young leaders.

Our innovative concept is designed to maximise the value that is captured within our Asia-savvy students. As a result of our conference, we hope participating New Zealand businesses will have an increased awareness of opportunities in Asia and the value of employing Asia-savvy graduates. Our first and second themes (above) were specifically posed to meet this objective. Similarly, we hope our forum of debate, discussion and sharing of Asia-related information will increase the capacity of New Zealand businesses by developing their knowledge of the Asian region and the role that Asia-savvy graduates can play in this process.

The conference is organised under the auspices of the New Zealand Asia Institute (NZAI), with sponsors external to The University of Auckland. Following the conference, participants will be asked to refine their essays, partly on the basis of conference discussions. Selected essays will then be published by NZAI in its publication series, adding a student dimension to debates about how we can better engage with Asia.



The 2011 organising committee from left to right: Muhammad Aman Ullah, Henry Shi, Jennifer Donnelly, Dinah Towle, Hugh Whittaker, Grace Ooi, Charles Chow, Kimberley Wu, Yen Hung Shih, Oliver Ibbetson, Roger Baars (absent Pia McKay)

The 2011 organising committee, supervised by Professor Hugh Whittaker, NZAI Director and Head of the Department of Management and International Business at The University of Auckland Business School, consisted of:

- Roger Baars, PhD student, The University of Auckland.
- Charles Chow, Adviser, New Zealand Asia Institute
- Jennifer Donnelly (Project Manager), Law/Arts student, The University of Auckland.
- Oliver Ibbetson, student, The University of Auckland.
- Pia McKay, Master of Science student, Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore.
- Grace Ooi, PhD student, The University of Auckland.
- Henry Shi, PhD student, The University of Auckland.
- Yen Hung Shih, PhD student, The University of Auckland.
- Dinah Towle, Office Manager, NZAI, The University of Auckland.
- Muhammad Aman Ullah, PhD student, The University of Auckland.
- Kimberley Wu, External Relations Coordinator, NZAI, The University of Auckland.

# Conference programme 2-3 September 2011

The University of Auckland Business School  
Decima Glenn Room, Level 3  
Owen G Glenn Building  
12 Grafton Road, Auckland

**Friday 2 September**

## Opening addresses

Professor Hugh Whittaker      Director, New Zealand Asia Institute, The University of Auckland  
Ms Jennifer Donnelly      Project Manager, Asia-Savvy Conference Organising Committee

## Session 1: Where are the jobs for Asia-savvy graduates?

Mr Charles Chow	Adviser, New Zealand Asia Institute
Dr Natasha Hamilton-Hart	Associate Professor, The University of Auckland Business School
Mr Champak Mehta	Director of Advancement, The University of Auckland
Ms Parizad Mulla	PhD student, The University of Auckland

## Keynote speech

Dr David Walker Deputy Secretary for Americas, Asia, Middle East and Africa Group,  
New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## Session 2: How can Asia-savvy graduates create new opportunities for New Zealand businesses?

Mr Owen G Glenn, ONZM	Founder and Executive Chairman, Vanguard Logistics Services
Ms Melissa Lee	MP, New Zealand Parliament
Mr David Cooper	Manager (Operations), Malcolm Pacific
Professor Hugh Whittaker	Director, New Zealand Asia Institute
Mr Gianq Ha	Management student, Massey University

## **Saturday 3 September**

### **Session 3: What do Asia-savvy graduates value in their relationship with New Zealand?**

Mr Raymond Huo MP, New Zealand Parliament

Mr SK Liow Partner, SK Plus Co

Mr Nelson Wang Director, Number Wise

Ms Yih-Cheng Tai BCom student, The University of Auckland

### **Session 4: How can our universities enhance the Asia-savviness of students?**

Professor Jilnaught Wong Deputy Dean, The University of Auckland Business School

Dr Jian Yang Associate Dean (Postgraduate), Faculty of Arts, The University of Auckland

Mr Simon Johnson BA (Hons, Cantab) student, The University of Cambridge

Ms Mahoney Turnbull LLB/BA/Dip Lang student, The University of Otago

### **Conclusions**

Professor Hugh Whittaker Director, New Zealand Asia Institute

Ms Jennifer Donnelly Project Manager, Asia-Savvy Conference organising committee

# Summary of keynote speech

Dr David Walker, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Being Asia-savvy has never mattered more to New Zealand. Our relationships with Asia are increasingly the ones that will determine this country's future.

## New Zealand and Asia

This shift in global economic weight closer to our own neighbourhood is a very good thing for New Zealand.

In all of these areas – import and export, investment, knowledge and skills – Asia is crucial.

Asian economies have already become a permanent and vital part of New Zealand's economic future. Thirty nine percent of New Zealand's total export goods now go to Asia – up from 29 percent in 1986 and 6 percent in 1964.

## Engagement with Asia in the regional architecture

Alongside our relations with individual countries, regional groupings are becoming increasingly significant in our engagement with Asia.

In the trade and economic space, this reflects the increasing integration of national economies. This evolution of cross-border/integrated supply chains represents a fundamental change in the structure of international trade. Nowhere has this trend been more evident than in Asia, where intermediate goods make up more than 60 percent of imports and China is the top importer of intermediate goods in the world. This integration of supply chains makes for compelling logic in favour of having a coherent set of regionally agreed regulatory rules for trade and investment.

The reality of trade rules in the Asia-Pacific region, however,

is very different. It has been famously described as a "noodle-bowl" of overlapping and sometimes contradictory regimes. In 2000, only three FTAs were in effect in East Asia. Today this number is closer to 50, with many more at various stages of negotiation.

Ultimately, trying to move forward using a patchwork of bilateral FTAs does not make sense economically, strategically or geo-politically. Businesses want to see clear and coherent trading rules. Integrated supply chains demand global, or at least regional, solutions. Now is the time to modernise and enhance trade rules to reflect the transformation that has taken place in production/distribution patterns and business models.

For this reason New Zealand is an enthusiastic supporter of the various regional economic integration initiatives under way. And, importantly, we see these as complementary - as potential pathways towards the same ultimate strategic objective.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is one pathway that New Zealand is pursuing toward a high quality, free trade agreement in the Asia-Pacific.

It is, of course, not the only one. APEC is doing some valuable work in this space, towards the objective of an FTAAP (FTA of the Asia-Pacific).

And New Zealand is closely involved in the economic integration initiatives in the East Asia Summit.

There are two ideas for integrating trade and investment flows in the East Asia region. The first is the concept of an



*Dr David Walker, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.*

FTA between the ten members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the north Asian economies of China, Korea and Japan. This is sometimes referred to as ASEAN +3. The second initiative is known as ASEAN +6 as it includes all of those nations as well as Australia, New Zealand and India.

The common denominator of both ideas is ASEAN. New Zealand has a longstanding relationship with ASEAN; a relationship which is becoming increasingly significant as ASEAN becomes more cohesive. The Australia, New Zealand, ASEAN FTA (AANZFTA) represents a strategic advance in this context.

### **People-to-people links**

At home, New Zealanders are coming into increasing contact with Asia and its people, through short-term visitors (students, tourists and business people) and also through

immigration from the region.

Over the past two decades, the number of people of Asian descent in New Zealand has grown rapidly. Over nine percent of New Zealanders now identify themselves as Asian; the figure is 19 percent for Auckland.

Statistics New Zealand estimates that by 2026 there will be 790,000 people of Asian descent in New Zealand, or approximately 16 percent of the national total. The face of New Zealand is changing.

### **Importance of being Asia-savvy**

For all that New Zealand is doing in Asia and with Asians in New Zealand, we could be doing better.

A 2007 survey of Asian businesses reported that New Zealand business people were well regarded and seen as

trustworthy by Asian counterparts, but their Asia-related skills in language and culture were perceived to be low.

The government recognises the need for New Zealand to lift its game in Asia. To this end the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been working to enhance access to markets through trade agreements and, with New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE), to improve support for business connections between Asian countries and New Zealand.

We are also moving to a strategic whole-of-government approach of supporting business and other groups to link ourselves more closely to the growth and dynamism of the Asian region.

Over the coming months I think you can expect to see greater articulation of the high level vision and operational strategies to focus Government, business and the general public's mind on New Zealand's relations with specific Asian countries.

But the role of officials is just one part of the equation. We need more New Zealanders who are confident in their dealings with Asia and Asian societies, and that will only come through greater familiarity and knowledge of the region and its people.

New Zealanders need to become more Asia-savvy so we can better engage with the region in which we are increasingly making our living.

Developing Asian language and cultural skills must become a priority.

We need to tap more effectively into the skills and networks of our Asian migrants. Asian communities, both new and old, bring Asia-relevant skills and connections to the region – attributes which should be of great value to New Zealand business.

Universities and other education providers need to continue forging links with Asia through scholarships, research collaboration, joint degrees and alumni networks.

Local government through its sister cities and other programmes, and organisations such as the Asia New Zealand Foundation, will also need to keep building up our non-official and parallel contacts with Asia.

### Concluding remarks

As an Asia-Pacific nation, New Zealand is well placed to take advantage of the new dynamics of Asia and harness the growing importance of the region for our future prosperity, security and cultural vigour.

The skill you have as Asia-savvy graduates will be important to New Zealand in meeting this challenge. I would say you are in the right place at the right time – it's a great time to be an Asia-savvy graduate.



# First panel session: Where are the jobs for Asia-savvy graduates?

**Mr Charles Chow**, NZAI Adviser, spoke about the relative rise of Asia compared with the rest of the world, and discussed professional opportunities and lifestyle for Kiwis in Asia. Drawing on his experience working as a senior corporate banker for JPMorgan Chase & Co and DBS Vickers Securities, Mr Chow said of working in Asia "...you want to learn how to walk fast, talk fast, and listen fast...", and that "hard work, readiness to sacrifice the present for the future, and willingness to give their children the best education at all costs, and a respect for elders – these are Asian values".

**Dr Natasha Hamilton-Hart**, Associate Professor, The University of Auckland Business School, spoke about the sectors that employed "Asia-savvy" graduates from her previous workplace over the past ten years at the Southeast Asian Studies Programme at Singapore University. Dr Hamilton-Hart listed banking, oil and gas, market analysis and sales, consulting and non-profit organisations as the key sectors that employ Asia-savvy graduates. She described environmental organisations, food and natural resources as growth areas for graduates to watch.

**Mr Champak Mehta**, Director of Advancement, The University of Auckland, has worked for Fonterra for the past eight-and-a-half years. Mr Mehta spoke about the need to go beyond the clichés when we think about employment in Asia, saying "you have to think a little bit more deeply about the diversity". Mr Mehta also implied that it is now up to the Asia-savvy graduates themselves to define their own career paths. "Traditional career structures are on the wane...and the jobs are where you want them to be."

**Ms Parizad Mulla**, PhD student, The University of Auckland, discussed her personal and educational background, and also spoke about the non-traditional career paths available in Asia. Ms Mulla said that in looking for personal satisfaction from your career, the benefit of working in Asia is that you can take a non-traditional path. An example she gave was of working for NGOs or causes in Asia – one could find personal satisfaction while making a difference.



*The First Session panel.*



*Ms Parizad Mulla, PhD student at The University of Auckland.*

# Second panel session: How can Asia-savvy graduates create new opportunities for New Zealand businesses?

Mr Owen G Glenn ONZM, Founder and Executive Chairman, Vanguard Logistics Services, spoke about his own business experiences, especially in China. Mr Glenn discussed the importance of New Zealanders maintaining their links with New Zealand if they do go overseas, in order to ensure that educated New Zealanders are utilised to the benefit of New Zealand. Mr Glenn also spoke about the cross-cultural expertise developed through overseas education; he gave the example of the expertise of Indian people educated in New Zealand, and the value of this unique cross-cultural knowledge to growing New Zealand companies in India. Mr Glenn also stressed the need to keep the momentum up in developing New Zealand's relations with different Asian states, saying the current trade partnership initiative between Malaysia and New Zealand "will not go anywhere, nothing will happen with that, unless somebody does something".

Ms Melissa Lee, MP, New Zealand Parliament, spoke about her own experiences as an Asian New Zealander, as well as the significance of New Zealand's expanded trade relations to the New Zealand economy. Ms Lee stated that "China is a success story for New Zealand...One in every eight dollars of New Zealand's export earnings has come from China."

Mr David Cooper, Manager (Operations), Malcolm Pacific, spoke about what it means to be Asia-savvy by describing the attributes of a particularly Asia-savvy employee at his own firm. Mr Cooper also acknowledged the need for New Zealand businesses to be more flexible and accommodating these days, saying "I think business leaders are more Asia-savvy than they were ten years ago".

Professor Hugh Whittaker, NZAI Director, spoke about the New Zealand business environment, particularly the



*Mr Owen G Glenn and Professor Hugh Whittaker.*

difficulties faced by small businesses wanting to expand into overseas markets; the potential for New Zealand businesses to meet developing needs of Asian markets in the area of food security, and the link between business leadership and Asia-savviness, saying that "we have a new generation of businesses emerging in New Zealand, and a lot of them are powered by Asia-savvy people".

Mr Giang Ha, Master of Management student, Massey University, discussed how Asia-savvy graduates can be and are utilised to the benefit of the New Zealand business environment. He spoke about Asia-savvy graduates forming a "bridge" between New Zealand markets and overseas markets. He summed up the role of Asia-savvy graduates in this business environment saying that "Asia-savvy graduates can help maximise the chances and minimise the threats for New Zealand businesses in Asia...They are the bridge which create opportunities for businesses at both ends, and New Zealand companies should take more interests in such graduates".

# Third panel session: What do Asia-savvy graduates value in their relationship with New Zealand?

Mr Raymond Huo, MP, New Zealand Parliament, covered New Zealand's relationship with Asia in terms of three key themes: Tibet, Taiwan and trade. Mr Huo also expanded on the previous discussions about the value of Asia-savvy graduates to business, stating that the benefits of being Asia-savvy are not limited to business, and add value in social, cultural, and linguistic ways as well.

Mr SK Liow, Partner, SK Plus Co, spoke about his own experience of finding work in New Zealand during the stockmarket crash of 1987, passing on the hopeful message to Asia-savvy students and graduates: "There will be people who value your Asia-savviness; there will be people who value your diversity".

Mr Nelson Wang, Director, Number Wise, talked about what it means to be Asia-savvy, saying it is "a mentality thing" turning problems into opportunities. Mr Wang also spoke about his own experiences being an Asian New Zealander, and took on narrow-minded stereotypes head-on, joking that "being an Asian driver, that's fantastic, we've got a special privilege, we can drive on the other side of the road, or take as long as we like to park a car".

Ms Yih-Cheng Tai, BCom student, The University of Auckland, unpacked what it means to be Asia-savvy, and discussed the value of seeing New Zealand society from an outside perspective. Ms Tai spoke about cultural differences between collectivist and individualist cultures, as well as the subtleties of communication that go beyond translation. As an example, Ms Tai said, "If someone says 'sweet as' to me, I understand."



Mr Raymond Huo, MP, New Zealand Parliament.



Mr Nelson Wang, Director, Number Wise.

# Fourth panel session: How can our universities enhance the Asia-savviness of students?

Dr Jian Yang, Associate Dean (Postgraduate), Faculty of Arts, The University of Auckland, spoke about the steps being taken at The University of Auckland to enhance the Asia-savviness of students, which include a variety of Asian studies courses at the University. He acknowledged that there is more work that can be done, and urged students to make use of the relevant courses on offer at universities as well as to take more interests in activities of organisations such as the NZAI and the Asia New Zealand Foundation.

Professor Jilnaught Wong, Deputy Dean, The University of Auckland Business School, spoke about his personal background and experiences as a naturalised Chinese New Zealander. Professor Wong also mentioned his learnings about cultural norms, including the exchange of business cards, and demonstrating respectful behaviour. He highlighted the need for more exchange programmes, internships and scholarships to Asian universities, to enhance the Asia-savviness of our students, stating that “it’s only when you live in the country and you assimilate with the culture that you get to know the nuances and behavioural practices, which are important to business relationships”.

Mr Simon Johnson, BA(Hons, Cantab) student, The University of Cambridge, took a theoretical approach and stressed the need to make students more aware of the context of specific ideas as “Western” rather than universal ideas. Mr Johnson argued that developing this awareness would enable students to fully appreciate that our ideas are not the only ideas, and to recognise the validity of “Eastern” ways of thinking and of conducting business.

Ms Mahoney Turnbull, LLB/BA/Dip Lang student, The

University of Otago, spoke about the practical ways in which universities could work to enhance the Asia-savviness of students. Ms Turnbull particularly stressed the importance of multiple university departments working together to promote Asia-savviness, rather than running initiatives separately. She also spoke about the wide variety of ways in which Asia-savviness could be promoted, using the events both run and partnered by her own university to provide examples.



Professor Jilnaught Wong, Deputy Dean, The University of Auckland Business School.



Ms Mahoney Turnbull, student at University of Otago.

# Student discussions and recommendations

## Where are the jobs for Asia-savvy graduates?

1. It is essential for Asia-savvy graduates to have a better grasp of the true economic, political and social situations in Asia, or in other words, the “real” Asia in the twenty first century.
2. The employment prospect for Asia-savvy graduates is dependent upon their abilities to adequately and appropriately apply their academic knowledge in the world of work.
3. Asia-savvy graduates must understand that “Asian values” are dynamic and ever-changing concept, and the people of Asia are evolving due to consumerism and other values related to the West.
4. Graduates who want to work closely with Asia must be able to see the difference between Asian work ethics and personal values.
5. By knowing Asian cultures and learning Asian languages, Asia-savvy graduates are highly adaptable and able to engage with Asia more successfully.

## How can Asia-savvy graduates create new opportunities for New Zealand businesses?

1. Help New Zealand businesses expand into Asian markets by working in those markets as representatives of New Zealand businesses.
2. Graduates of Asian descent have knowledge about Asia and networks from their parents and extended family. This understanding and these ties could benefit New Zealand businesses that employ Asia-savvy graduates.

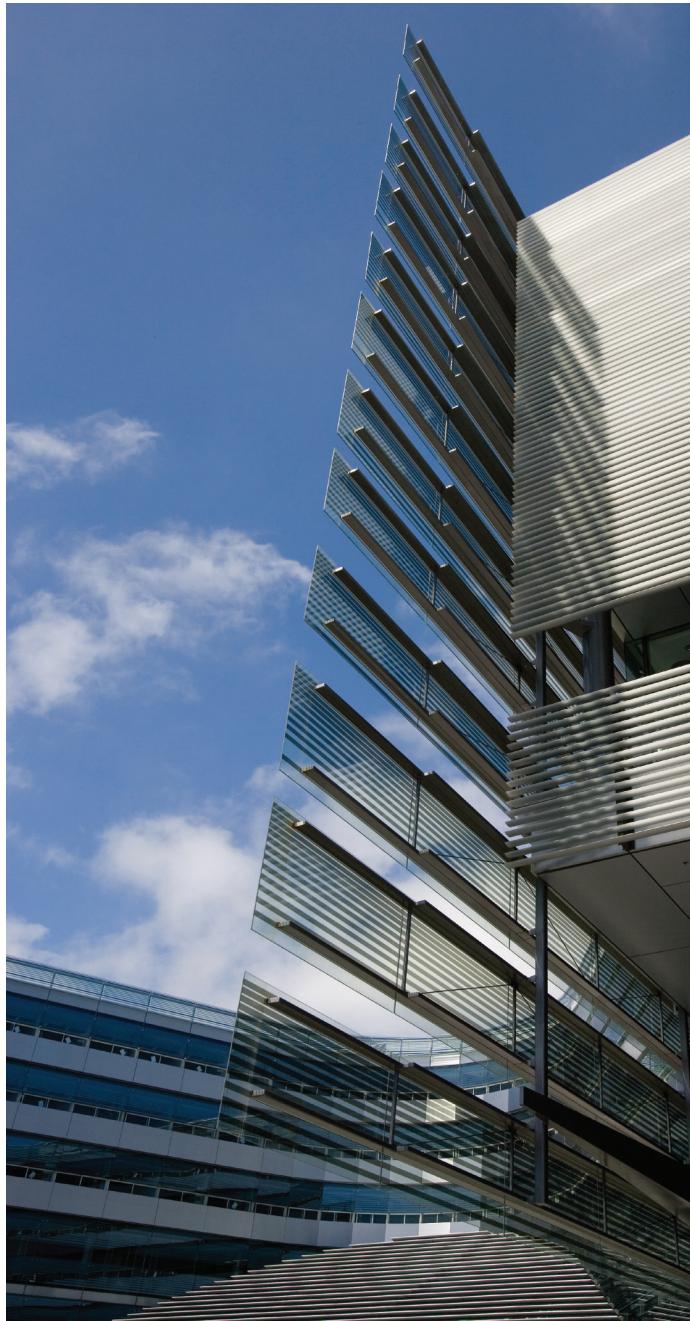
3. Asia-savvy graduates who have worked in Asia for some time should then come home to New Zealand to share their knowledge.
4. There is still a strong divide between the labels “Asian” and “Western”, and this needs to be changed – the global economy needs to be merged more.
5. Localisation – there are many great products in New Zealand that can be localised elsewhere, we just need the knowledge and help of the people from these other locations to help localise them.

## What do Asia-savvy graduates value in their relationship with New Zealand?

1. New Zealand is so multicultural that it is easy to fit in and make connections. Is this just Auckland though?
2. Asia-savvy graduates value New Zealand’s approach towards multiculturalism and diversity. They benefit from access to diverse cultures through their relations with New Zealand. There are greater opportunities for them here compared to cities that are not so “Asia-aware”.
3. Asian graduates tend to prefer to stay in New Zealand for reasons such as New Zealand’s environment and social structure.
4. Asian graduates are still disadvantaged in seeking jobs in New Zealand potentially due to discrimination.
5. Value in New Zealand: peacefulness and multiculturalism are some of the aspects that make Asia-savvy graduates want to stay here.

## **How can our universities enhance the Asia-savviness of students?**

1. Emphasise Asian language learning (eg, taking language courses), which can potentially influence Asia-awareness and can benefit business students, especially, in forming networks and international business relations. For example, language learning is compulsory at the University of Waikato.
2. More scholarships should be available to Asia-savvy students to facilitate their Asia-related studies or research.
3. Student-led conferences and presentations in universities and schools will promote and enhance Asia-savviness in students.
4. Platforms, such as sport, should be used to facilitate interactions and understanding between students from different cultural backgrounds.
5. Educating the educators at secondary and tertiary levels about what it means to be Asia-savvy and its importance in educating our youngsters.
6. More information about education systems in Asia should be provided in exchange programmes.







2011 Asia-savvy Conference participants.





# Selected student essays

## Asia-savvy graduates hold international appeal

Ivana Drinković

The University of Auckland



The world of the 21st century is often called a global community. Yet it is a community that is still quite disconnected. A lack of understanding separates countries from one another, whether it is by language, culture, or economic or political standing.

Asia continues to grow into a prominent global power and as a result, other nations show the need and desire to interact with the continent. This is why Asia-savvy graduates are more than just graduates. They are links to a future of success in international relations, trade and other professional arenas. This essay will illustrate that the clear need for Asia-savvy graduates in today's world means that job opportunities range from the political arena and multinational companies to aiding domestic businesses.

Today, international agreements between countries no longer just consist of formally executed visits and carefully worded policy. A growing focus is emerging on building relationships, strengthened by goodwill. Prime Minister John Key's effort to facilitate a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India illustrates the opportunities Asia-savvy graduates have within the Government. With larger countries, such as the United States, also negotiating an FTA with India, New Zealand cannot stand on sheer size and economic strength alone. Nor does it have some 30 years to develop a strong diplomatic relationship with India, as it did with China. This is where Asia-savvy graduates are indispensable. A deeper understanding of Asia can ease and quicken what is often a difficult and lengthy road to building international relationships. By arriving in India with Black Caps Captain Stephen Fleming and directing a scene

with Bollywood actors, the Prime Minister is differentiating New Zealand from other competing countries by connecting with India on a deeper level. This shows how graduates with Asian know-how can help break down the invisible cultural barriers that often hinder political relations.

Multinational and Transnational companies are continuously monitoring the global environment to keep track of changes in cultural, economic and political situations in countries of interest. While knowledge of the target country's national language is important, an understanding of its customs and values is also indispensable in the business world. With this information, companies can create and alter marketing campaigns and products to suit each country. In Japan, the number four (Japanese: shi) also means death and is thus considered an unlucky number. For this reason, Tiffany & Co. does not sell fine china and glassware in sets of four; opting for sets of five. Whether a country is developed or developing will have a strong impact on average per capita household income and therefore consumer purchasing power. Although many countries in Asia can be considered developing, this term is deceptive. For example, China and India are fast developing into significant world players and their income growth is expected to stimulate world trade well into the 21st Century. Trade regulations, if not carefully understood, can greatly hinder a company's ability to trade in Asia. Japan has approximately 11,000 trade regulations, while the Malaysian Government does not allow for advertisements which portray an excessively aspirational lifestyle. Being unaware of these regulations or simply misunderstanding them can have serious consequences for a company's relationship with that country. From this brief glimpse of some of the relative factors, we can ascertain that there is an immense amount of critical knowledge needed to conduct business with Asia. In this field, Asia-savvy graduates will bring their business knowledge,

coupled with specialised knowledge of Asia to aid a global company in enhancing business performance.

With the evolving economic environment in Asia, graduates can look towards more entrepreneurial lines of work within New Zealand itself. As a country which relies on a strong tourism industry, it is worrying that the financial global crisis has lead to a continuing decrease in traditional visitors from the United States of America and the United Kingdom. However, Statistics New Zealand reports that there is a steady increase in visitors from Asia. With these changes in mind, Tourism New Zealand has emphasised prioritising attracting visitors from Asia rather than from our traditional markets. In these situations, Asia-savvy graduates can best consider how to attract Asian tourists to New Zealand. For example, American tourists largely choose New Zealand for its natural scenery and perceptions of New Zealand as being somewhere new in the tourism market. However, Chinese tourists choose New Zealand for its environmentally friendly and clean image. Therefore, promoting New Zealand through a portrayal of its clean rural areas and uncongested streets would be more successful in China than it would in America. With the use of internet technology, any business can connect with any country in the world. In this way, Asia-savvy graduates can also find jobs in smaller domestic businesses, possibly even one they had started themselves. For example, with the Rugby World Cup about to begin, hotels and inns will have to differentiate themselves from the multitude of establishments available. Therefore, an Asia-savvy graduate could emphasise the fact that their hotel rooms have a shower and a bath to attract Japanese patrons, as bathing is a significant part of the Japanese culture.

This essay has illustrated the extensive range of professional spheres where Asia-savvy graduates are needed and can flourish. As Asia continues to grow into a stronger world player, communication and activity with the continent will steadily increase. However, barriers to these interactions will

be inevitable. That is why any professional sphere intending to create a healthy working relationship with Asia will need Asia-savvy graduates to close gaps created by cultural differences or build upon cultural similarities.

## Where are the jobs for Asia-savvy graduates?

Yei Lin Choi

The University of Auckland



Today we often call the world a “global village”. This phrase is generated from globalisation, indicating that the mass media and communication have brought the world together into a state of interdependency between nations. We now cannot survive on our own. Hence, diplomacy has become more important than ever. New Zealand, specifically, is unique in the fact that its society is a mixture of different cultures and races, emphasising the importance of diplomacy not only internationally, but also “diplomacy” within the country. In this aspect, I would like to define Asia-savvy students as the future “citizen diplomats”. I believe that in the future they will act as pillars to harmonise different understandings between Asians and other ethnicities within New Zealand, as well as improving international relationships in economic, social, and cultural terms.

Asia-savvy students study in different areas; biomedical science, law, and business are just a few of many. They soon will be the protagonists of New Zealand economy. They are the future doctors, lawyers, and CEOs and will give their best in their fields. As the world’s economic axis is changing from Western society to the Asia-Pacific region, they will inevitably meet clients from Asia sometime during their career. Often, overseas companies have different interests and concerns from New Zealand companies. Asia-savvy graduates will be able to act more quickly and sensibly than others because of their experiences with international business as Asia-savvy

students. Through this knowledge and experience, they act as a bridge between New Zealand and Asia.

New Zealand is a country of great cultural diversity consisting different races such as Pakeha, Māori, Asians, and more. The first big flood of immigration took place during the 18th century by Europeans, mostly from England. Now, New Zealand is facing the second flow. It is the flow by Asian immigrants. The proportion of Asian people in New Zealand has increased slowly during the last few decades and we can notice they are taking significant roles in the country and more are out there with potential, including myself. A well-known example to the public is Melissa Lee, the list MP of the National Party. The proportion of Asians in Auckland is currently close to 20%, and it is estimated that by 2025, a quarter of the entire population in Auckland will be Asian. However, an invisible "wall" among races still exists today. The local people tend to have a common excuse of blaming the immigrant's "poor" English skills and Asian immigrants tend to make themselves comfortable in their communities only. In reality, both parties are equally responsible and we must move forward. The Asia-savvy graduates will be able to acknowledge the issues of both sides, taking the role of social balancer.

We all realise that cultural differences are significant among countries. Hence, it is critical in international business to learn and understand the client's cultural background. For example, Korea has the "drinking party" customs which having a drink with the client after business meetings is a symbol of trust in each other, and often acts to extend the business while drinking. If a person from another country neglects this fact and does not attend, it can be regarded as an insult that he is not willing to carry on business with them. Many people whose work includes international marketing read books about manners and customs in different countries. Asia-savvy students can refer to cases that they have heard from experts as well as their own experiences to respond to unexpected situations wisely.

Another reason that being Asia-savvy is so important is the shift in the world's economic axis from Western society to the Asia-Pacific region. Also, the increasing Asian population in New Zealand gives us an extra incentive to further New Zealand's relationship with Asia and its people. The Asia-savvy students are the mediators in various areas of work which help our community prosper.

### **Where are the jobs for Asia-savvy graduates?**

Matthew Harris

The University of Canterbury



New Zealand has established Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with China, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Hong Kong and Malaysia, and is currently in negotiations for bilateral agreements with Vietnam, South Korea, Japan and India. This gives the illusion of an easy entry for New Zealand businesses into the Asian markets, which is not the case. Aside from the geographical barriers that come with being an island in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean, higher wages, different political systems, contrasting customs in conducting trade, and cultural differences present significant challenges for New Zealand businesses to trade with Asian markets. Asia-savvy graduates should be part of a solution for New Zealand businesses in facing these head winds.

While some New Zealand companies such as Fonterra with its Anlene, Annum and Anchor brands have a large presence in Asia, many see the growth of the New Zealand economy coming from niche products, with large mark-ups, in global markets. There are varied reasons for New Zealand's struggle to compete in the markets for large scale, mass produced products such as the high costs of labour, the cost of exporting, and the lack of ability for New Zealand firms to operate on the economy of scale required to make the cost of the product internationally competitive. High-end products for niche areas

of the world economy are thought to be a very attractive option for New Zealand businesses and entrepreneurs to create sustainable growth and jobs in the New Zealand economy. Companies like Weta Workshop providing digital effects for Hollywood movies, Fisher and Paykel Healthcare exporting biomedical technologies such as oxygen providers for infants to the United States and radio communications company Mobile Mentor contracting with Brazilian Police for digital radios in Sao Paulo, are examples of companies that have created a product with a point of difference that is truly world leading in their field.

It is proposed that jobs will be available for Asia-savvy graduates who have an understanding of Asian markets and can see opportunities for New Zealand-based companies to provide high end, niche products for certain segments in the Asian economy. While an understanding of macroeconomic factors should not be ignored, it is the intricacies of this vast market that should be targeted by Asia-savvy graduates. Do Chinese consumers want sales advertising in 3D? Is there a demand from the growing upper-middle class in India for Fisher and Paykel Appliances' dish drawers? Should Hamilton Jet consider a marketing campaign to the new spending professionals in Singapore? Asia-savvy graduates offer valuable insight and information for exporting New Zealand companies, and offer a bridge between trading in the New Zealand economy and exporting into Asia.

While Asia-savvy graduates provide a potential large financial upside in their ability to understand and identify areas in the Asian economy that New Zealand companies may provide solutions for, it is considered to be equally important for New Zealand businesses to have Asia-savvy employees to avoid the perils of commencing trade with another culture without that expertise. The name Coca-Cola in China was first rendered as "Ke-ke-ken-la". Unfortunately, the Coca-Cola did not discover until after thousands of signs had been printed that the phrase means "bite the wax tadpole." Coke then had to research

40,000 Chinese characters to find a close phonetic equivalent; "ko-kou-ko-le", which can be loosely translated as "happiness in the mouth".

Translation problems are not the only source of difficulty with integrating into a new trading market. Cyclical trading patterns are different depending on religious holidays and monsoon seasons. Different tariffs and quotas are imposed in some countries in different industries. There is different infrastructure availability, working culture, tax rates/breaks and levels of corruption. Any company thinking of beginning trade into Asia needs comprehensive due diligence performed, and Asia-savvy graduates are in the perfect position to provide this insight and information. The value of the Asia-savvy graduate increases when this knowledge of the trading environment is coupled with professional skills linked to the product or services that may be exported. Whether this is through the design process from an engineering graduate or dealing with marketing a finished product, the combination of a graduate being in tune with the intricacies of the New Zealand company's potential markets and having a skill set from experience and study that will help these companies along their production process is an extremely valuable skill set.

The jobs for Asia-savvy graduates are spread across the New Zealand economy, but are focussed in sectors that foster innovation to spot niche areas of the world economy that a New Zealand company has the potential to excel in. Their expertise is critical on the entrepreneurial side, to identify where New Zealand products will be successful in Asia and also on the implementation side, to ensure that any introduction into the Asian economy is carefully planned, scrutinised, and undertaken to ensure maximal effect. Graduates of many different disciplines offering a skill set to employees along the entire production process, coupled with being in tune with the Asian cultures, people and economies become extremely valuable for a company trading, or contemplating trade with the growing Asian economies.

## **How can Asia-savvy graduates create new opportunities for New Zealand businesses?**

Yih-Cheng Tai

The University of Auckland



Once considered an opportunity-taking-bunch, now an opportunity-creating-group, as Asian economies continue to boom, Asia-savvy graduates should start positioning themselves as job-creators for New Zealand. As second generation migrants, Asia-savvy graduates exhibit many traits that are different from those of their parents, the first generation migrants. This difference enables Asia-savvy graduates to become opportunity-creators for New Zealand businesses.

Instead of being born and raised overseas, many second generation migrants have been “born overseas, but made in New Zealand”, and hence have a much better command of both English and their home country language than the first generation migrants. This bilingual background is invaluable in a business context. While these Asia-savvy graduates, like any other professional translators, are capable of reducing misunderstanding through accurate translation, their cultural competence to think and act like Asian consumers and to react as Kiwi businessmen (knowing what is best for New Zealand) goes well beyond any well-trained translators.

Furthermore, in the era when enabling customer collaboration is what creates a premium in today’s market, New Zealand has a very distinctive advantage over many other countries due to its relatively mature migrant culture. For instance, in the case of Asia-savvy graduates, as they no longer suffer from the language barriers their parents did and the mismatch between skills and jobs, New Zealand can utilise them to increase customer collaboration and produce premium products.

On top of that, many of the assumptions about Asian consumers made in the past are no longer required as many economies have opened up for investment and the associated consumer research. Therefore, full consumer engagement should be encouraged to increase new opportunities for New Zealand businesses. The significance of Asia-savvy graduates on this matter will be magnified as technology continues to create platforms for customer collaboration and facilitate the growth of social media networks.

In short, Asia-savvy graduates, with an advanced understanding of at least two cultures and languages, the empowerment of information technology, and their already built network in Asia, can provide the New Zealand businesses with new insights and accurate feedback to develop new products tailored to the taste of Asia.

However, to effectively create more robust opportunities for New Zealand businesses, Asia-savvy graduates need to be provided with a programme that will send them back to their home-countries, gather them for intercultural exchange forums, and place them in businesses that will allow them to voice their opinions.

Firstly, Asia-savvy graduates need to be given the opportunity to go back to their home-countries to study the business environment and develop their ability to deal with the current challenges faced by New Zealand products and services. For instance, graduates can gather information in both languages to have an overall understanding of the reasons behind the successes and failures of our two most high performing industries – the dairy and tourism industries. The reality check and the development of a problem-solving mindset will enhance these graduates’ ability to provide constructive feedback for New Zealand businesses later.

Secondly, upon the return of these graduates, forums for an intercultural exchange need to be held to get an insight into different regions and dimensions of Asia. After all, the mass

market is dead and has been replaced by a mass of niches. This is particularly evident in Asia for each country, or even each region within a country has its own unique set of values and tastes for consumption. It can be fatal for businesses to treat everyone as "Asians".

Thirdly, these Asia-savvy graduates must be placed into New Zealand businesses based on the specific needs of the companies. With the reality check, and the ability to communicate fluently in both languages, businesses in New Zealand will be updated on the rapidly changing trends in Asia, frequently with the provision of realistic solutions. Furthermore, they will also be coordinators of feedback from their home-country consumers. Communication between New Zealand companies and Asian consumers will become more frequent since communication is made easier through synchronised language, online platforms, and social networks. In particular, I believe Asia-savvy graduates will be able to contribute specifically to two stages of new product development for New Zealand businesses – brainstorming and pre-pre-testing. In the brainstorming stage, because of the ties and bonds they have with their country, ideas are generated more easily. As for the pre-pre-testing stage, these graduates can act as filters during the pre-pre-test stage, ie, before pre-tests are launched in Asia, a pre-pre-test can be conducted on these graduates for a first stage feedback in English.

Somewhat interestingly, many second generation migrants often exhibit traits of both their home-country and New Zealand. For instance, saving is considered a merit in China, while wise spending is considered an investment in New Zealand. Many different but not necessarily conflicting values make up these Kiwi-Asians, making them more balanced in taking risks for business opportunities, and trustworthy for both consumers overseas and their shareholders in New Zealand. However, the possession of these traits may also lead to identify conflict, and thus the government in New Zealand must play an important role on this issue, before it becomes a

cause of the brain drain. Perhaps, these Asia-savvy graduates can attract talents to New Zealand through their networks to reduce brain drain, and create further opportunities for businesses here.

New Zealand has already taken the initial step in the late 1980s to embrace cultural diversity by opening up its land to international talents. Now the next challenge is to harness the power of its unique human resource. Whether New Zealand can make sure that the economic growth of Asia spills over to the Pacific is highly dependent on how it utilises these Asia-savvy graduates.

### **How can Asia-savvy graduates create new opportunities for New Zealand businesses?**

Stephanie Stewart

The University of Canterbury



The first thought that crosses my mind is what it means to be Asia-savvy. Is it to be able to converse in an Asian language or to have visited some Asian countries?

My second thought is why Asia? Isn't North America the most influential continent in the world? Isn't Australia our main trading partner?

I did not have to look far to find my answers to my questions. These led me to change my understanding of what it is to be Asia-savvy. Asian countries are of growing importance to the people of New Zealand. Increasing numbers of New Zealanders are descended from people native to Asian countries, as distinct from Europeans, Pacific Islanders and Māori. Asian countries are important to our growth as a nation and their influence on the rest of the world is also increasing. Asian economies have got to be the most influential economies at the moment; they have grown rapidly in recent years and are on track to keep doing

so. There is no doubt that New Zealand's future growth relies on maintaining and developing our relations with this prosperous region. But we as New Zealanders already know this don't we? Then why is more not being done to prepare ourselves for the future, a future that is almost certain to be dictated by the great emerging region that is Asia.

New Zealand businesses are faced with a disadvantage right from the start. While as individuals we enjoy and benefit from our vast open spaces and un-crowded cities, our businesses suffer from low domestic growth opportunities compared to many other nations. Put simply, our population is limiting the growth of our local businesses. In order to develop, these businesses need to expand into other regions and expanding into Asia has provided great opportunities to many New Zealand businesses already.

Expanding into Asia does not just mean a business shifting its offices or opening up new divisions: it includes other options as well. We are increasingly seeing firms import more and more from Asian countries. Gone are the days of China and their cheap, low quality exports. Local firms are now struggling to compete with these large Asian organisations, not just on a cost basis but also on quality.

Asian countries have low labour costs, New Zealand manufacturers, and manufacturers around the world cannot compete with this. So why would we try and compete with them? If New Zealand manufacturers want that competitive advantage over the rest of the world, then they need to move their production offshore, into Asia. Macpac is a great example of a New Zealand designer and manufacturer who overcame initial resistance and moved production to Asia. Macpac is now reaping the rewards from a product that is of higher quality than it was before, and of a lower cost.

It is crucial that we appreciate the importance of Asian countries to our markets, as sources of cheap goods, commodities and labour; and of capital as sources of knowledge, creativity, innovation and imagination. However this is not enough, in order to build positive, lasting working relationships with these Asian countries we need to have the skills to deal with them. We need to be aware of the cultural differences that do exist, we need to be aware of diverse business practices, and we need to learn to embrace them.

To be an Asia-savvy graduate you need firstly to be comfortable in Asian settings, you need to understand the impacts of different cultures on how they conduct business, and it would definitely be helpful to speak at least one Asian language. Employing Asia-savvy graduates is a crucial step to becoming an Asia-savvy business. Having employees who understand how to operate and communicate effectively in Asian settings will make your operations so much more successful. This will ensure that the relationships that are built are lasting ones, an aspect of business that is valued immensely by Asian cultures.

As a small Pacific nation, we have two choices: adapt to our changing environment, or be left behind in the dust. Asia savvy employees are the key stepping stones to ensure your business successfully connects with the Asian economy, a step which is becoming more and more important as our country becomes more diverse and as we become more dependent on our neighbouring Asian countries.

## **Asia-savvy graduates: The bridge to twenty first century Asia**

Giang Ha

Massey University



The world is now in great shape with international relations making it more connected than ever. And in the new global economy, Asia has become a central issue for business, as put by New Zealand Prime Minister John Key in 2010: "From an economic perspective the global power base is starting to shift into Asia". That will be the greatest destination for New Zealand businesses, but a question arises: how to reach that promised destination most efficiently and swiftly? The main issue addressed in this article, therefore, will be the answer for the above question: Asia-savvy graduates and the opportunities they bring about.

Before going straight into the issue, let's have a brief look at the global business context. The current US debt crisis is delivering a critical blow to the American market, which has already been weak since the 2008 financial crisis and the US Federal Reserve's Quantitative Easing 2 (QE2) in late 2010. In the meantime, other Western economies don't seem to be doing much better. Hence, with its rapid recovery and enormous potential, Asia is now becoming the new safe-haven for international capital and businesses. It is high time New Zealand businesses made their stand in this new trend, with the help of Asia-savvy students as instruments.

In the first place, Asia-savvy students can bring up precious insights about the competitive advantage of New Zealand businesses and their partners. As Asian students come to New Zealand, they also bring along knowledge about their home countries' economy and society. This will help reduce the time taken to research Asian context, as well as assist the academic studies of New Zealand about Asia. In 2009,

a major study about Asia was carried out by the Asia New Zealand Foundation and 50 top New Zealand companies. Such works can be even more efficient if the knowledge of Asian students is to be used. And this is not hard at all, taking into account the rapid increase of Asian graduates from New Zealand universities, with the exact figure of 20 percent in 2003.

Moreover, after receiving proper education from New Zealand institutions, many Asian students will join the local work force for a period of time. Then, they will have knowledge of the business here through their own points of view, and these could provide good insights for New Zealand companies to acknowledge their own competitive advantages in business with their Asian counterparts. For instance, the competitive advantages of New Zealand businesses in technological knowledge and creativity, together with Indian businesses' in terms of government connections, finance etc. can make a perfect exchange.

Asia-savvy students are, additionally, a good source of labour that New Zealand businesses cannot and should not overlook for their youthfulness, innovation and quality. According to the Department of Labour, New Zealand is experiencing a slowdown in labour force growth caused by an ageing population, with one in four people in the workforce expected to be aged 55 years or older by 2020. A younger demographic group of Asia-savvy graduates is needed more than ever. And more than just youth, they offer a range of insightful innovation and creativity if used appropriately by employers. There is a conspicuous trend that New Zealand is being increasingly integrated with the diversity of the Asia Pacific region, with the motive force of Asia-savvies here in the country. Businesses therefore are to take advantage of this by adapting to and managing its diversity, which can help foster superior decision-making, creativity, and innovation. In detail, this creativity and innovation that Asia-savvies bring is valuable to new product or service developments,

and sales/marketing strategies for diverse customer bases.

However, along with the chances that Asia offers, difficulties and challenges are inherent as well. Fortunately, Asia-savvy students are here to play a crucial role in helping to avoid the risks from various issues in Asian developing countries when it comes to off-shoring business in Asia. There are various forms of entry when entering a new market: project office, joint ventures, piggybacking, domestic collaboration, and wholly-owned subsidiary, all of which require local knowledge on government policies, industry standards and the likes. A good and precise entry will make a bright prospect, but a careless one might bring enormous damage. One particular example for this is the case of Fonterra and its joint-venture partner in China, Sanlu. This has revealed the high risk of inappropriate management in abroad operations, as well as the lack of understanding of local government, which took Fonterra a whole month to begin the process of problem-solving in China.

In conclusion, this essay seeks to show the critical role of Asia-savvy graduates in defining and realizing opportunities for New Zealand businesses. They are not only a good source of labour but also a motivation for innovation and a source of precious insight. Their knowledge in Asian-related business will help to maximize the chances and minimize the risks in the field, both for business in New Zealand and off-shoring business in Asia and around the globe. To put it another way, Asia-savvy graduates are, metaphorically, the bridge which creates opportunities for businesses at both ends. Therefore, the argument from this essay suggests that New Zealand companies and firms need to take more interest in such graduates. Their diversity should not be seen as an obstacle, but a useful tool – if used appropriately – for New Zealand businesses to find their way to develop, expand, and thrive in the 21st century, the era of Asia-Pacific.

## How can New Zealand universities enhance the “Asia-savviness” of students?

Antony Barton

The University of Auckland



New Zealand is inextricably connected with Asia. In a geographical sense, we are very much located on Asia's doorstep. Despite this relative proximity, New Zealand has only recently reached out to Asia and acknowledged the value of a close relationship with the region. Until the mid 1980s, New Zealand's economic and political orientation was strongly aimed towards Great Britain, the rest of Europe and the United States. While Japan was a major trading partner, overwhelmingly, New Zealand had little to do with Asia as a whole. However, in 1987, New Zealand took its first steps towards moving out of Asia's periphery and decisively into the region's interior. By liberalising the immigration of Asian citizens, New Zealand quickly became home to thousands of Taiwanese, Vietnamese other ethnic Chinese citizens. In a little over 20 years, New Zealand has been transformed from being a bicultural country, to a multicultural country. The momentum of this shift has been rapid and now in 2011, we are firmly placed in Asia's direct sphere of influence. With all the talk of “Looking East” policies, free trade agreements and various other diplomatic ties with Asian states, it has become increasingly important for New Zealanders to be “Asia-savvy”. While there are many discussions to be had about “Asia-savviness”, this paper will primarily talk about how universities may enhance the “Asia-savviness” of its students.

What it means to be “Asia-savvy” is probably something that will be discussed throughout the New Zealand Asia Conference. But from the outset, I think it would be important to outline what the phrase means to me. In my opinion, a person who is Asia-savvy is firstly someone who has a

broad, general understanding of Asia- in terms of its history, geography, culture and political economy. Someone who is Asia-savvy should also have a grasp on where the region is heading and the various opportunities that it presents.

On top of this, a person who is Asia-savvy should be someone who can identify and acknowledge Asia's tremendous diversity. Still today, Asia is all too often stereotyped and oversimplified. Even among politicians and leading businesses, there is an imbedded notion that Asia is mysterious and foreign and therefore a phenomenon which cannot be readily understood. If we hold such positions, we as citizens, businesses or as nations, become less open to learning from others and become inward-looking; we become less receptive to opportunities and more reluctant to reach out and communicate with our peers. Thus, more than ever, in a globalised world, where markets, nations and people are becoming increasingly integrated and interdependent, we need to be mindful of our developing Asian neighbours and attempt to understand them and actively communicate with them. In doing so, we can prevent ourselves from viewing Asia as uniform, static and foreign. Instead, we can begin to appreciate its diversity and look for ways to mutually benefit one another. Thus, I think a further characteristic of an Asia-savvy person is that they can recognise Asia's diversity and see as it as a pedestal for greater learning and development.

Finally, to be Asia-savvy, someone should be able to empathise with Asia. The word "savvy" connotes knowledge, insight and familiarity and while these are undoubtedly important qualities, I think having a deeper connection with Asia, or at least being prepared to have a deeper connection with Asia is also something that is just as important. When one has an emotional connection to something, they can engage and communicate on an entirely different level than someone who is only acquainted with something at face value. Hence, as people interested in fostering stronger relations between New Zealand and Asia, we should be interested in how we can

develop deeper connections with the region.

Before considering how universities can enhance the Asia-savviness of students, I think it is also worth briefly discussing why universities should be interested in enhancing the Asia-savviness of students in the first place. As suggested above, there is undeniable opportunity in Asia. In a commercial sense, there are great opportunities for entrepreneurs to build or start ventures in increasingly open and receptive markets such as those in China and Vietnam as well as more established markets such as Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong. For firms in innovative and technology oriented industries, there also appears to be a multitude of opportunity. Similarly, in social and cultural spheres, with Asia becoming increasingly accessible, we have the opportunity to immerse ourselves in new cultures, languages and environments. In light of experiencing other cultures, we are compelled to reflect on our own customs and identity and this self-reflection process allows us to learn more about ourselves as well as others. In effect, we acquire a new lens by which to view our own world and those around us. Thus, if we continue to immerse ourselves and reach out to other Asian cultures, there is always that chance for us to learn about ourselves and our Asian neighbours. Universities are most likely to be aware of these opportunities and it is perhaps why they are concerned with enhancing the Asia-savviness of their students.

Having outlined some interpretations of what Asia-savviness may mean and why universities may be concerned with it, we can now explore ways in which they may be able to enhance the Asia-savviness of students. One way that universities may be able to enhance the Asia-savviness of students is by encouraging the interaction of university students with local Asian communities. While nothing can quite substitute the experience of being in a foreign country and having your senses challenged with exotic and wonderful things, in New Zealand, we are fortunate to have many thriving Asian communities who have transferred their way of life to their

adopted home in Aotearoa. For a casual observer, a walk around the Otara or Avondale markets can therefore be an eye-opening experience as one can see literally dozens of different Asian ethnicities, mingling and shuffling in one big, harmonious scrum.

Thus, if universities can help form a bridge between students and local Asian communities, students' appreciation and understanding of Asia may be enhanced and the seed for a more empathetic relationship may be sown. As universities stand now, there may be dialogue between academics and community leaders; but there appears to be little in the way of real, meaningful interaction between students and Asian communities. I believe that in getting to intimately know our local Asian groups, we will be provided with an opportunity to further develop our understanding of greater Asia. The fact that there is only a minor level of contact between local Asian communities and New Zealand students suggests that we should also direct our energies into being "Asia-savvy" within our own communities, perhaps even before attempting to focus on Asia proper.

A second way universities could enhance the "Asia-savviness" of students could be by promoting activities which might encourage students' to build a deeper connection with Asia. This may include establishing exchange programmes with Asian universities, facilitating forums and conventions for students with an interest in Asia, encouraging volunteer work with local Asian communities and promoting the study of Asian languages and culture. There are indeed a whole host of other strategies that universities could consider; but the overriding theme here is that the activities should enable students to foster a deeper connection with Asia. As I mentioned above, not only are such relationships more fulfilling, but arguably, they make us more conscious and discerning citizens too. In my opinion, this deeper connection and understanding is at the heart of "Asia-savviness". Thus, if universities want to enhance the "Asia-savviness" of its students, I would propose that they

focus their energies into strategies which are conducive to these relationship-building activities.

To conclude, I think it is worth acknowledging the work of the organisers of the New Zealand Asia Conference, as it is exactly this type of event which may set in motion the process for students to develop their own "Asia-savviness".

### **How can our universities enhance the Asia-savviness of students?**

Parizad Mulla

The University of Auckland



It is increasingly being acknowledged that the most transferable and therefore the most valuable assets new graduates can possess are communication skills and the development of social networks including individuals from all walks of life. Such networks are also highly valued in Asia. In many senses, a trademark of Asia has always been its diversity, and now that diversity is increasingly being embraced by a new generation whose associations often reach far beyond their own narrow cultural or geographic borders. Moreover, Asia has always comprised a myriad of cultures, languages and worldviews, but it is now possible for students outside of Asia to benefit from its diversity more than ever before. Digital technologies, globalisation and unprecedented economic growth in many Asian countries have set the foundation for cross-cultural exchanges that are extremely exciting in both scope and scale. To harness these developments and enhance the Asia-savviness of their students, universities need to first enhance the Asia-savviness of their own processes and programmes.

Action drives experience and understanding, so if universities want to enhance the Asia-savviness of their students, they need to act to create learning experiences that correspond

to the global realities those students will face. Unlike many Western countries with recessionary economies and aging populations, Asia is increasingly optimistic and youth-driven, and this means that Asia-savvy students potentially have the capacity to grow vast networks with their peers in a rapidly growing region and outside of it. For instance, Singaporean Ministry of Trade Figures state that GDP for that economy has grown by 8.3% in the first quarter of 2011, and demographics for countries such as India indicate a large and rapidly growing youth population in a country that is wired as never before. Indian census figures indicate that close to 50% of the population of over a billion people in India are now under 25 years of age. If universities want to enhance the Asia-savviness of their students therefore, they need to first grasp the realities of such dynamic and youth-driven economies themselves, and then actively implement programmes that would help students connect with their Asian peers to develop lasting cross-border relationships.

Social capital has always been a currency in Asia as elsewhere, but the opportunities to actively create links across geographical and cultural borders have never been as vast or varied as they currently are. The creation of such links is important in enhancing the Asia-savviness of students, because the direct interaction it allows would provide them with an insight into an alternate worldview from their own, and it would give them the opportunity to create lasting personal relationships. Alongside the growing youth populations in Asia, digital technology and social media are rapidly shrinking the distance between countries like New Zealand and the rest of the world, so students here now have the capacity to create and enjoy cross-cultural communication and communities at the touch of a button. In order to help them do so, universities here need to create valuable cross-border experiences that are increasingly Asia-centric. For instance, universities in New Zealand can and should harness available technologies to create alliances with Asian universities that would allow their students to interact with their Asian peers in classroom and

group contexts. Classes (particularly in business schools for example), should be open to enrolment from students not only on campuses in New Zealand, but also in Bangalore, Beijing and any number of other Asian localities in which partnerships can be forged. Those classes could then be enjoyed by students on a variety of international campuses via electronic feed, allowing for a potentially much more varied classroom experience. Not only could classes here be open to students overseas moreover, but much of the team-based learning that is already occurring could be enhanced through the development of cross-cultural and cross-border learning teams which encourage diversity and social networking. This would not only enhance the Asia-savviness of students through more experiential learning, it would also help them to build relationships within the region that could be mutually beneficial in future.

Universities have traditionally been a forum for the development and transfer of knowledge, but going into the future, they need to do this with an understanding that both the knowledge and the 'digital natives' who will be driving it, must be transferable across borders.

While in the past this may have meant movements to Europe, North America and Australia, increasingly many of the opportunities available will be for those with an Asia-savvy mentality. Universities need to better harness the opportunities of a shrinking world increasingly looking towards Asia, its booming economies and its youth for optimism and direction, if they are going to adequately prepare their students for global careers in the 21st century. As stated, to do this, they need to develop their own very active relationships with institutions in Asia, and then cultivate an open dialogue in which they can include their students. Once such links are created, the potential benefits for the universities concerned and for their students, are essentially limitless, but to enhance the Asia-savviness of their students, they must first enhance their own.

## **How can our universities enhance the Asia-savviness of students?**

Mahoney Turnbull

The University of Otago



New Zealand universities have a long way to go before they can truly claim they are producing generations of graduates that are Asia-savvy. This oversight by the tertiary sector poses as a real danger. Why? Quite simply, we have entered a new age where responsiveness to Asia is critical and the strengthening of our relationships with the region even more so. Universities must orientate themselves towards embracing the opportunities this new era offers. Neglecting to hone students' perspectives on the Asian dynamic, beyond the confines of their New Zealand campus, will be fatal to our progress within Asia. I believe there are a multitude of ways our universities can effectively groom our grads for a savvier understanding of Asia and the role it will play in their lives. What these institutions must bear in mind is that flexibility in the educational sphere is the key to steering our students towards international awareness. For there to be a paradigm shift in the Asia-savviness of students, the academic framework must allow for fresh developments and ongoing evaluation.

I believe that certain departments within the University must make some crucial changes to the course structure. From my experience of the Politics department within the Humanities sphere at the University of Otago, I have become aware of the concerning lack of focus on politics relating to Asia. It is a reflection of this oversight that there is only one paper offered relating specifically to Chinese foreign policy and only one introductory 100-level paper on politics of the Asia-Pacific. Compare this to the plethora of papers orientated towards our own national politics, the US, the Middle East and more

obscure countries, and my concerns are justifiable.

Educating the educators is an essential element to effecting change in the savviness of students. Professional development for academic staff could be facilitated by members of the various relevant societies, institutes and foundations in New Zealand focused on Asia-New Zealand and also academics from other universities within and outside New Zealand. Within New Zealand, the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre poses as a valuable source of intellectual capital with leading academics who would be open to illuminating how students need to equip themselves for the new international system that is emerging. Fostering links within Australasia to further the pool of expertise could be advanced with universities such as the Australian National University, where there is an entire college dedicated to the specific study of Asia and the Pacific. Creating opportunities for professional development could also be enhanced by utilising the forum of the Otago School of Foreign Policy, a reputable annual fixture since its inception in 1966. Now one of the premiere events in the international calendar, this poses as the perfect platform to raise the level of knowledge and build upon the network of individuals who can share their learning with the wider academic community and, most importantly, establish new courses directed towards increasing Asian awareness.

Live interaction with Asian students is a must. I think universities have the capacity to offer a lot more engagement opportunities by maximising the wealth of Asian students that are studying in New Zealand. There are ample chances to provide forums and partnerships beyond the "language match" programme that already exists and provide firsthand experience for New Zealanders on and off campus. Intercultural exchanges are highly desirable but for those who are limited in capacity to travel, starting local is an obvious first step. Universities should be integrating experiences such as social functions, and cultural events in line with Asian festivals as key fixtures in their calendars and also incorporating guest lectures and

seminar programmes with relevant speakers and associations. Promotion through social media channels is crucial in boosting student awareness and involvement and would encourage greater interaction amongst the students.

I also think the University Student Association could extend the International Students' Representative portfolio to encompass an "Asian student representative" who can help facilitate the opportunities offered to students in relation to the Asia-savviness drive. I also see scope for this model to extend to the other tertiary institutions, including the Polytechnics and Art and Design Schools. As the burgeoning arts scene in New Zealand regularly attracts prominent Asian artists of a variety of disciplines, there is potential for Universities to draw upon their presence and shed light on another side of the Asian dynamic.

It is also important not to forget the historical links each New Zealand city has with Asia. In my place of study, two vital links have long been established with Otaru and Shanghai as Dunedin's sister cities. Universities could maximize the solidified bonds for furthering the pursuit of Asia-awareness and stimulate increased communication with the universities implicated in the partnership.

New Zealand has a unique foot in the Asian door and we are lucky to have experienced so many "firsts" with China. If we are to retain this special status with the rising global superpower and other key countries in this region, it is absolutely essential that our universities do not drag the chain by ill-equipping our next generation. Reflecting the new era by offering highly relevant courses and opportunities for students is an unavoidable route for the tertiary sector to take that must be supported by national educational policies and frameworks. To become Asia-savvy is not an optional extra. It is a prerequisite for New Zealand's economic survival. Action must be taken and I believe that with a collaborative approach, our universities can generate graduates who epitomise globally aware, Asia-savvy, young New Zealanders.

## **New Zealand in the Asian century: The role of New Zealand universities in unlocking the future potential of Asia-savvy students**

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The growing importance of the Asia region to New Zealand and "our future with Asia" is a fact widely acknowledged by many and evidently highlighted in the 2006 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade White Paper. However, as the report noted, New Zealanders are simply not "Asia literate", a limitation that prohibits the country from fully seizing opportunities with Asia. As future leaders in their respective fields, university students have a pivotal role in equipping New Zealand with the competencies and experiences to successfully engage with Asia. Therefore, universities have a critical responsibility to implement strategic changes that will give current students the cross-cultural competencies to ultimately shape the future of New Zealand and develop this nation's untapped potential. This paper will specifically demonstrate how increasing international exchange participation at universities is an important, yet effective, strategy in enhancing the "Asia-savviness" of New Zealand students.

Being "Asia-savvy" is fundamentally no different than being "Asian literate". However, Asia-savvy is more than the ability to converse in Asian languages and recall city names in China or Vietnam for example, even though intellectual comprehension are important attributes nonetheless. More important features of being Asia-savvy are the possession practical knowledge in business and politics within the Asian context, and firsthand experiences of Asian cultures and peoples. Coupled with personal linkages and connections with individuals from Asia, these constitute the essential determinants Asia-savviness.

From this perspective, international exchange programmes at

universities can be hugely beneficial, yet critical, at enhancing Asia-savviness of students. The growing importance of Asia accentuates the need for students to not only have the knowledge of Asian politics or business, but also the essential cross-cultural competencies and personal experiences from Asia to engage meaningfully. Hence, international exchange programmes can be an effective means to acquire firsthand experience in the Asian context and enhance students' level of intercultural competency. International student exchanges can be compared to workplace internships, in that they bridge the essential gap between academic learning and practical experience. Students on exchanges can develop their skill base by experiencing and witnessing the realities and dynamics of Asia for themselves. This could be local business or social etiquettes, slang or even state to society interactions which are important insights that students are not likely to gain from textbooks. Therefore, universities should complement theoretical knowledge accumulation in the Asian context by encouraging firsthand experience in Asia through exchange programmes. These two policies make up two sides of the same coin, that is, to enhance the Asia-savviness of current students and future New Zealand leaders.

The personal relationships or contacts developed on exchange between students make invaluable contributions to the understanding each other's cultures. Ultimately, these dynamics not only enhance the Asia-savviness of New Zealand students but also promote New Zealand's interests abroad. Personal relationships and contacts are central in Asian societies, whether in business or politics. Thus, personal links held by domestic students with people in Asia are hugely beneficially, especially for New Zealand businesses as it may provide the necessary connections and opportunities for firms to expand into these markets. Likewise, reciprocal exchange students from Asia to New Zealand can act as "diaspora advocates" to their peers once they return back to their home countries, which could potentially boost tourist inflows and foreign investment. Therefore, increasing international

exchange student participation is a positive-sum game and a dual mechanism that advances, not only the Asia-savviness of domestic students, but also drives New Zealand's economy and international trade through networks with our neighbours.

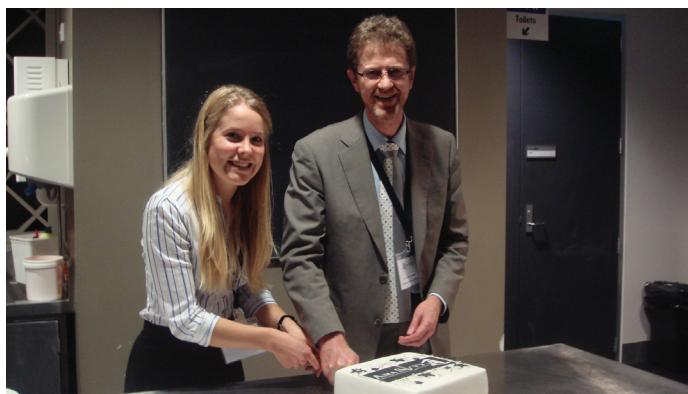
Although international exchange programmes are extremely beneficial in terms of advancing students' engagement and understand of Asia. Recent studies have demonstrated that too few New Zealand university students participate in international exchange programmes, particularly to Asian countries. Earlier studies revealed that in 2004 the total number of outbound exchange students from New Zealand universities was only 281, an insignificant sum compared to the domestic student population of 37,9155 that year. Similarly, other studies have found that only around 1% of domestic tertiary students in New Zealand participate in some kind of overseas experience during their degree. Out of the domestic students that participated in exchange, in 2001, 56.4% of students choose the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom or Sweden as destinations while only 7.6% picked the People's Republic of China or South Korea. Astonishingly, no students that year went on exchange to Indonesia, Vietnam or even Hong Kong but three New Zealand students went across the Tasman to Australia.

On the other hand, several Australian universities are well placed in giving their students exposure to Asia. For instance, Murdoch University encourages prospective exchange students to study at Hong Kong universities by enticing them with \$4,000 scholarships and accommodation subsidies, while an astonishing 27% of Macquarie University graduates have, at some point in time, studied abroad as part of their degree. Recently, the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee recommended that the Australian federal government establish a target that 10% of all undergraduate students study overseas as part of their degree. New Zealand universities need to urgently address the low number of student participants to Asian universities if they are truly

dedicated to advancing the Asia-savviness of their students. Instead of an internationalisation strategy that focuses on attracting full-time fee paying international students from Asia, New Zealand universities should acknowledge that much more emphasis is needed on increasing the exposure of New Zealand students to Asia.

Boosting domestic student participation in exchange programmes to Asia no easy task. This requires university dedication, legislative changes and even willpower by students themselves to study in Asia. Nevertheless, encouraging universities to further internationalise their curriculum by increasing exchange participation to Asian universities may reap many unquantifiable, yet substantial benefits that

enhance the Asia-savviness of students. Fundamentally, there are countless policies that can be implemented by universities to improve the Asia-savviness of New Zealand students. Increasing international exchange participation to Asia is just one element of a wider set of policies to advance the understanding and engagement of an increasingly important region that is deeply entrenched into New Zealand's economy and society. Ultimately, universities are indispensable institutions that shape and influence students at a critical juncture in their lives. Therefore, it is up to New Zealand universities to act, for they have the ultimate ability to mould current students into the Asia-savvy citizens that are so desperately needed, now and into the future.





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