Griffith Asia Institute Strategy Statement

“If we do nothing else in this university, we will teach Asian Studies and we will cultivate good relations between Asia and its neighbours around the Pacific Rim”.

Griffith University Foundation Chancellor, Sir Theodore Bray.

1. The Purpose of the Griffith Asia Institute

From its inception, Griffith University has been focussed on, and engaged with, Asia. In the spirit of this tradition, and with a view to further deepening Griffith’s regional engagement in the twenty-first century, GAI’s mission is to produce innovative, interdisciplinary research on key developments in the politics, security, economies, and societies of the Asia-Pacific.

The primary areas of focus for GAI are Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific.

By promoting knowledge of Australia’s changing region and its importance to our future, GAI seeks to inform and foster policy-relevant academic scholarship, public awareness, and considered, responsive policy making.

GAI will continue to develop as a national research resource that encapsulates Australia’s need for forward-looking debate about the nature of its present and future engagement in Asia.

More specifically, GAI’s purpose is to:

- Achieve a reputation as the research centre of first choice for researchers, students, partnering academic institutions, government, business and industry, and the media on issues of enduring importance to Australia’s regional future.

- Achieve a reputation for international and national research excellence in the areas of scope relating to GAI and become the pre-eminent university research centre in its defined areas of expertise.

- Generate a high profile within Australia and internationally for the Asia-related research strengths of Griffith University, particularly in relation to Asian politics, security and development, a defined Area of Strategic Initiative.

- Promote the study of Asia in general and generate a focus for Asia-related research training across the University.

- Build links with international centres of Asia research excellence.
- Provide a platform for dialogue with government and industry with a view to enhancing GAI’s influence, as well as broadening its base of research funding.

2. **The Setting and Strategic Imperative**

Asia is the world’s most rapidly changing region, and developments in this region will exert the greatest set of influences on the rest of the globe for the coming decades. The abilities of the countries of Asia to manage the challenges they face, and the ways in which they channel their development and burgeoning influence, are pressing questions for the world, and for Australia.

Understanding the sources, pace and direction of change in the Asia-Pacific is crucial for Australia’s future. There are two major trends of change in the region:

- The rise to power, wealth and influence of Asian great powers, and their likely alteration of the regional order, its rules and norms, inclusions and exclusions; and

- The evolution of globalisation-intensified challenges to Asia-Pacific societies—from religious fundamentalism and communal conflict, to social and demographic change and governance issues.

There is substantial research being conducted on these topics. However, little of this research is being conducted with the intent of mapping the influences of these trends on the evolving regional order in Asia.

3. **Strategic Focus and Scope**

In order to address these major issues, GAI’s research will focus on how Asian countries’ management of current challenges is shaping the emerging regional and global order. The Asian great powers’ methods of managing their growing influence and the perceptions of others, and all regional states’ processes of responding to the trials of development and social change, will have a major effect on the evolution of Australia’s international environment.

Specifically, the focus of work undertaken by GAI will be:

- Geographically on the Asia-Pacific (with a specific focus on Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific).

- On the current and future policy related challenges posed by rapid regional change in the security, political, social (including cultural), and economic realms.

- Analysing the sources of change across these areas and the broader longer term consequences for Asia’s regional order.

- Focusing on the nature of states’ responses to the salient security, political, social, and economic challenges confronting the region.

GAI’s research program will approach these issue-areas inductively and cumulatively, through Priority Research Programs (PRPs) that examine how Asian countries are being challenged and how they are responding.
The selection and design of each PRP is based on:

- How they illuminate the way in which outcomes across the above issue-areas are shaping regional institutions, norms and expectations.

- How they showcase to external stakeholders GAI’s research scholarship currently being produced by its academic members.

- How they articulate with GAI’s role in the ARC Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security and its close collaboration with the Griffith Centre for Governance and Public Policy in achieving high quality research outcomes as part of the University’s Areas of Strategic Initiative.

Against this background, GAI’s Priority Research Programs are:

- **China Policy Program**, which is concerned with the political, security, economic, and social challenges attending China’s rise.

- **Asian Security Program**, which focuses on traditional and non-traditional security issues in the region, such as terrorism, the environment, and pandemics, from material and normative perspectives.

- **Asian Governance Program**, which examines how regional states are responding to external and internal challenges through institutional, policy, and legislative reforms.

- **Asian Economies and Political Economy Program**, which examines economic change in Asia from cross-disciplinary perspectives.

- **Islam and Politics Program**, which is concerned with the impact of trends in religious piety and fundamentalism, and broader regional and global ramifications.

### 4. Strategic Rationale

These five Priority Research Programs serve the GAI’s purpose and mission in several senses.

- They ask forward-looking, policy-relevant questions that speak directly to one of the great uncertainties in international affairs: how the evolution of the regional order in Asia will affect Australia’s regional future.

- They focus on issues of more immediate interest to government policy departments and business, such as the implications of China’s rise to great power status. This, more immediate, policy-relevant focus is likely to enhance GAI’s ability to access government and industry.

- They build on areas of traditional research strength within the Institute and target areas of emerging importance, thereby facilitating and benefiting from the building of links with national and international centres of research excellence on Asia.
5. **Delivery of Strategy Outcomes**

Primary objectives are:

- To publish the Institute’s research output in books, articles and reports in high quality outlets.
- To access a broad base of competitive and non-competitive grant funding for GAI academic scholars.
- To impact on academic and government communities nationally and internationally
- To generate a research profile for GAI among government, industry, and academic communities that reflects the expertise of its researchers while at the same time showcasing Griffith’s strengths in Asia-related research.
- Develop, sustain, and reinforce research linkages with national and international centres of Asia-related research excellence.

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