



AAH Policy

FUNDING FOR PUBLIC RESEARCH INTO FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES MARCH 2021

The [Australian Academy of the Humanities](https://www.humanities.org.au/about-us/) is the national body for the humanities in Australia. As one of the nation's five Learned Academies, we provide independent advice and expertise to government and policy makers on issues of national and international significance.¹ Our work aims to ensure ethical, historical, and cultural perspectives inform discussions regarding Australia's future challenges and opportunities.

In our short submission to the Inquiry into Funding for Public Research into Foreign Policy Issues, we want to bring to the attention of the Committee the role of the Academy in Australia's policy and research landscape and to flag one of our current research projects.

The Academy was established by [Royal Charter](#) in 1969. We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation with a [Fellowship](#) of over 670 leaders and experts in culture, history, languages, linguistics, philosophy and ethics, archaeology and heritage. This Fellowship gives the Academy unique access to some of the nation's most eminent cultural researchers with expertise on the wider Asia-Pacific region, and through them to an extended network of experts in Australia and across the region.

We receive a grant-in-aid from government, through the Higher Education Research Promotion (HERP) scheme, administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Skills, to support activities to foster understanding of the importance of, and/or promote research and scholarship in, science, social sciences, or humanities in Australia.² Our mandate includes promoting Australian humanities research and policy development internationally; assisting Australian researchers to develop and strengthen international partnerships; and collaborating with local, regional and international organisations to promote and foster knowledge exchange.

The Academy periodically undertakes independent reviews of national capabilities in the humanities and arts with a view to informing strategic planning and investment decisions at the institutional level in the national higher education system.³ In association with the Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA), the Academy also contributes to reports on emerging issues for Australian public policy consideration. Several of these have dealt explicitly with

¹ See <https://www.humanities.org.au/about-us/>

² See <https://www.dese.gov.au/higher-education-research-promotion-herp-scheme>

³ See *Mapping the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences in Australia* <http://www.humanities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/AAH-Mapping-HASS-2014.pdf>; *Humanities in the Asia Region* <https://www.humanities.org.au/advice/projects/asia/>; and the Future Humanities Workforce <https://www.humanities.org.au/advice/projects/future-workforce/>. The latter two projects are funded through the Australian Research Council's Learned Academies Special Projects Scheme – <https://www.arc.gov.au/grants/linkage-program/linkage-learned-academies-special-project>

Australia-Asia relations including *Smart Engagement with Asia* and its set of contributing reports, and *Australia's Diaspora Advantage*.⁴

Most recently we have been awarded funding through the National Foundation for Australia China Relations (NFACR) in its 2020-21 grant round for a one-year project: *Mapping Australian research and training capacity in China studies and identifying areas for improved capacity*.⁵

The project will survey Australia's research and training capacity to effectively engage with and understand China at an important juncture in the relationship; and identify the knowledge needs of select stakeholders involved in the China relationship. The project will deliver a final report in February 2022.

Australia's ability to engage effectively with China – across federal and state governments, private sector, non-profits, cultural organisations and diaspora communities – depends significantly on the capacity of Australia's higher education system to train personnel, conduct research and communicate evidence-based findings for the benefit of these sectors and the general public. At present there are critical gaps in our understanding of the capacity of Australia's universities to meet these needs.

The project team is led by the Academy's Vice President and International Secretary, Professor Louise Edwards FASSA FHKAH FAHA. She chairs an Advisory Group comprising experts on China, higher education and research, and foreign affairs policy.

If you would like to discuss our submission, or any details of our work, please contact the Academy's Executive Director, Dr Christina Parolin

⁴ See <https://acola.org/engaging-with-asia-saf03/> and <https://acola.org/transnational-business-networks-saf11/>

⁵ See <https://www.humanities.org.au/advice/projects/>