
International and Global Studies Student Feedback & Recommendation Report

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Wherein errors (academic, factual, or otherwise) occur in this report, Jaspar McCahon-Boerma takes full
responsibility for their inclusion.



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The student community of the Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Advanced Studies (International and Global Studies) [henceforth referred to as INGS] comprises the first cohort that commenced in March 2018 and encompasses all current INGS students across all years from 1st- 4th. As students progressing through the International and Global Studies stream, we have come across numerous issues across several administrative areas, including but not limited to; in-built Honours study, degree progression, exchange requirements, internship units, language major and minor requirements, INGS student representatives, the Dalyell Stream and with Scholarship recipients.

With many students from the 2018 cohort first recognising issues within the progression of the INGS degree in 2019, these various administrative issues have continued into the present. The maturation of students into the final year of this stream has brought home the consequences of these issues. In response, the INGS student community has collated our concerns and recommendations for potential solutions through a cohort-wide survey. This survey had over 70 responses within 2 weeks, and detailed their year of study, their main questions and concerns surrounding the organisation of the INGS degree, alongside their recommendations and solutions. This student-led report regarding issues within the Arts/Advanced Studies (INGS) degree includes our student impact statement, a summary of the main problems that INGS students are facing, and finally, our recommendations for potential resolutions.

It is crucial to note that this report is not exhaustive. It is the cumulation of only 2 weeks of formal inquiry, with a relatively limited student reach - a task admittedly not helped by the dissolution of the INGS Student Representative Position in 2021 - combined with issues raised during class and interpersonal discussion. We hope it will serve as a springboard for further investigation and change, and not be considered its culmination.

Alongside this is the acknowledgement that while this report is formally addressed to Professor James Curran (Degree Director of INGS), the bulk of the authority to deal with the problems laid out below (particularly those structurally related to the Advanced Studies Program more broadly), is in the domain of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. As such, we wish for this report to be circulated to all USYD Academic and Administrative bodies that have the jurisdiction and agency to correct the problems outlined below, and implement the provided recommendations (or genuine equivalents).

Key problems:

1. Lack of clarity, communication, and support in academic information/progression
2. Enrolment of students into an incomplete degree
3. Honours Credit Caps and requirement information
4. Exchange uncertainty and lack of structural support
5. Dissolution of the INGS Student Representation Position
6. Disappearance of the INGS Internship Unit
7. FASS4901 Unpaid requirements
8. Many other important specific problems

Key recommendations:

1. Consistent in-person student consultations throughout the process of implementing the suggested recommendations
2. Report response and information packet
3. Reinstatement of the INGS Student Representative Positions
4. Greater support and communication for students through multiple suggested avenues
5. Specific information sessions & handouts for current and incoming 1st year students
6. Many other specific recommendations for Honours, Exchange, Internship, FASS4901, and other issues

2. STUDENT PREFACE

Before engaging with the specific collective academic grievances and recommendations explored below, we want to make clear the personal and professional impacts of these issues. As a whole, International and Global Studies students are very passionate about our degree and enjoy the content, the teaching staff and the professional outcomes this degree promises. Despite our genuine enjoyment of INGS and how we feel prepared to tackle the careers and community work that we aspire to in future, we feel it necessary to further address the complex issues within the INGS degree.

However, the degree progression advice has drastically changed from the 2018 INGS undergraduate handbook to the updated handbook released in March 2020. It was admitted to INGS students in late 2019 that the 4th year of the Advanced Studies INGS degree had yet to be planned. As such, the degree's misleading advertising and unplanned nature has deeply impacted many students' academic progression which then had negative consequences for their personal and professional livelihoods.

Having consulted with more than 60 students across the INGS cohort, many students expressed concern about how being barred from Honours study would directly impact some students' plans to pursue a PhD. Due to the confusion and ill advice regarding degree progression and unit requirements, some students have been forced to delay their graduation by a period of at least six months. Delayed graduation for many means being prevented from certain graduate program opportunities.

Furthermore, many students remarked on how the reason we chose to enrol in an INGS degree was for the enticing internship and exchange program requirements. The internships were either inexplicably cancelled or were never planned in the first place and we were also never told that it was impossible to embark on semester-long exchange if we wanted to pursue Honours study. As a result of these miscommunications and misleading advertising on behalf of the University of Sydney, many students reported feeling disappointed and unprepared for graduation. In terms of the 4th year Industry and Community Project Units, many students expressed concern over the Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm availability over the holiday intensive units. Having little choice over our compulsory unit requirements with such strict timetables restricts INGS students' capacity to work for a living and support themselves financially.

Regarding the quality of education and administrative support, many students also expressed frustration and disappointment with the University of Sydney itself. Unfortunately, the continued frustration over the course of completing the INGS degree has led to several students dropping out of the stream due to how difficult it is to navigate. Despite enjoying the degree itself, some students that are reaching the end of this undergraduate degree are looking forward to applying for postgraduate studies at other universities instead of the University of Sydney due to the poor management of INGS and the lack of administrative support given.

Ultimately, the INGS cohort understands that this degree is currently facing complicated issues, and we appreciate the work of the academic staff members who have continuously liaised with us and are attempting to resolve these issues. We understand that these deeply complex problems embedded within the Arts/Advanced studies INGS stream burden departmental staff, including Professor James Curran, Dr Rohan Howitt, and Dr Vek Lewis to name a few. We hope that these staff members are adequately reimbursed for the hundreds of hours of administrative work that they have had to do. We thank you for reading our impact statement and sincerely hope that all these issues will be addressed in the near future.

3. OVERARCHING ISSUES

We believe that these 4 overarching issues form the framework within which the more specific are located. While they are not necessarily the catalysts of the issues themselves, we see them as the reason students have reached the stage of confusion

Clarity of Information

To put it simply and genuinely without hyperbole, no INGS student we have encountered - in any year - could say they were certain about their academic progression, what their 4th Year consisted of, the choices available to them for INGS research, or the requirements for such. All of these issues, and those expressed below, are to some degree underlied by the lack of accurate, concise, and clear information provided to students in the INGS stream. A great number of the below issues simply cannot be solved by students at present, or could not have been solved by students at the time of their manifestation, because of a complete absence of relevant, accessible information. While some of the below issues can *technically* be answered through consultation of multiple sections of the handbook in concert, even those have required the specialist knowledge of degree directors or staff to decode.

Such an absence of important information, and the lack of clarity in existing information, makes situations that should be solvable through student investigation nigh impossible.

Communication

When the above information does become available, there is no widespread communication made about it to the INGS cohort, if the change is communicated at all. Most of the information students have been able to piece together around these issues has been through word of mouth, stemming from individual problems being solved on a student-by-student basis. There have been occasions where a seminar or meeting has been held for information sharing, such as the 2019 INGS Student Information Seminar. However, the problem inherent in such a method of information communication is that students who were not able to attend due to work, study, life commitments or a range of other legitimate reasons, missed out on the crucial information delivered verbally or during the Q+A that was not notated on the shared presentation slides.

This cannot constitute for a centralisd, written, cohort-wide problem solving and information distribution channel. The methods previously and currently employed have and often continue to lead to increased confusion by a mismatch of individual students' feedback. The inadequacy of such a system is compounded when students receive contradictory advice from official university sources on complex topics, a situation that has occurred repeatedly throughout the past 4 years.

In such a situation, students' trust in information they receive is completely eroded, as it becomes increasingly difficult to determine the official *and correct* information from the official *but incorrect* information.

Support Networks

To complement the above issues, the lack of dedicated support networks for INGS students makes attempting to solve the problems presented below incredibly difficult. The general consensus amongst INGS students is that consulting the Student Centre on any matters related to the INGS progression is a dead end, as its advisors - through no fault of their own - have almost no knowledge of the specifics or intricacies of the degree progression or requirements. Most inquiries are bounced around all number of departments, schools, or administrative groups, before almost inevitably channeling through to the degree director Professor James Curran or Dr Rohan Howitt. While they have been admirable in their efforts to help students with the wealth of issues faced in a speedy and effective manner - for which we thank them - it has become clear that they are not adequately supported to deal with the wealth and depth of the issues that have been posed to them by such a large number of students. It is completely unreasonable that students should be expected to understand the specifics of their degree when even the Degree Director does not have all of the information necessary for specific advice on the given issues.

Ongoing Degree Construction

A final, and especially formative, overarching issue, is that of the seemingly ongoing nature of the INGS degree construction. While this is less the case in 2021 than it has been in previous years, it has been clear for some time that this degree pathway was in a categorically incomplete state when students were first admitted to it in 2018. Indeed this was explicitly stated in the 2019 INGS Student Information Seminar by staff - “[4th Year progression and Honours] has been, and still is, in construction.” We believe that the admission of students to a degree pathway in an incomplete state is, apart from being frankly inappropriate in an educational capacity, a central pillar of the issues experienced, and continuing to be experienced, by INGS students. A lack of clear academic progression information, of knowledgeable student support, of accessible latter-year information or requirements, and of exchange flexibility systems, are just a few of the issues we see inextricably linked to students being enrolled in an unfinished degree.

That (several) students can perfectly follow the progression laid out in the Academic Handbook they were provided at the beginning of their degree, while also following all advice from academic staff, and still be barred from units (or told the units don't exist) in the final year of their degree because of retrospectively applied requirements, is testament to this.

That being said, what follows is a detailed breakdown of the specific issues we have identified with the INGS stream as it stands. Again, it is in no way an exhaustive list and we hope it will not be treated as such.

4. SPECIFIC ISSUES

1. Honours

The first, and arguably most pressing, topic of issues regarding the INGS degree currently, is that of Honours. Immediately it should be noted that, as a direct result of the issues presented within this section, combined with both the opacity of information regarding them and the lack of pathways for remedies, *INGS students have dropped out of the course, with some even transferring to other universities to complete their Honours year.* Again, these actions were taken not because of the course content, but because of the progression issues and lack of support they faced.

That being said, here are the issues identified with INGS Honours at the present time. There are doubtless others that have not been raised in this list.

(a.) The Credit Point Cap: The current requirement of 48 Credit Points within the Global Studies Program for the enrolment in INGS Honours has meant countless students have either been barred from entry into Honours, or will be barred from entry on their future application. Students were not told that the undertaking of electives (or in some cases, the Dalyell units they were heavily incentivised to take) would make them ineligible for the Honours stream in future because of the very restrictive INGS program structure. Indeed, students enrolled in 2018 had no possible way of accessing such information even if they had been informed of it, as the Honours stream and its requirements *did not exist until 2019.* As such, some students were made ineligible for the Honours stream from Year 1 Semester 1, before the INGS Honours stream had even been completed, and before any information on the requirements were available. We believe this is unacceptable.

Furthermore, information regarding the Honours Credit Cap, and its role in academic progression is *still* not being conveyed to students in any meaningful widespread capacity. During consultation with INGS classes from 1st Year through to 4th Year, almost all students were shocked, confused, and dismayed to hear about the information garnered from some students about the Credit Cap, having not been informed or made aware of it before. Many realised they were therefore ineligible in their current situation for further INGS research through the Honours program.

(i). In addendum to this, we want to note that the solution proposed at the current time - that is early exit from the INGS course and re-enrolment into the Honours stream - does not resolve this issue adequately. In requiring changes to students' transcripts after up to 4 years working through the INGS program to the best available information, as well as

re-enrolment into the new fee structure (doubling the cost of study), this workaround unduly punishes students.

(b). Honours in Second Major: There is confusion regarding the possibility of completing Honours in students' other (non-INGS) majors. Seemingly the information - again garnered through individual responses from Faculty - is that this is not possible. However, students were not informed of this at the beginning of their degree, nor at any point throughout it. An inability to enrol in an Honours program in our second majors is a huge academic barrier, with seeming little justification.

(c). Honours after Advanced Coursework: Another issue of Honours confusion is that of the possibility of enrolling in the Honours program after completing the 4th Year Advanced Coursework. Many students would like clarification as to whether this is a possibility.

2. Exchange/Study Abroad

Exchange, and the academic progression framework around it, is another crucial area of problems that requires attention. This is particularly important within the INGS stream because of the specific requirement for students to complete exchange units to complete their degree, as well as the international focus of the entire degree. Several significant issues have been present for years pre-COVID, and the shift to COVID-impacted exchange requirements has resulted in the emergence of a few more.

Again the impact of these issues is important to note. Several students have had their degree progressions severely impacted by the problems below, with some having their graduations delayed by up to a year, or entry to Honours denied. We believe it is likely more would have been affected in similar ways had not COVID barred the possibility of Honours for a significant number of students

(a). Lack of framework for unit accreditation: The first overall exchange problem is the lack of an effective existing system for overseas INGS unit-matching. While this has occurred on a case-by-case basis, the lack of a built-in system for INGS unit accreditation at foreign universities means the undertaking of a semester-long exchange *presents* as almost certainly requiring extension of degree length by 1 semester at minimum. Even more disappointingly, this is an issue that was previously raised in an identical way at the 2019 INGS Student Information Seminar. At the time there were already student concerns, which were directly expressed to academic staff, with the lack of an appropriate structure for this. Despite this, we have seen no official programs or systems put in place to make such accreditation more flexible. The desire for INGS units being completed as holiday courses was a proposal during the 2019 Seminar which, despite being seemingly pondered as a possibility at the time, has not been implemented.

(b). Inability for Semester exchange/Honours combination: Semester exchange, without INGS unit accreditation, requires extra units being taken for full time study, pushing students over the Credit Limit for Honour enrolment. This is a huge oversight and runs antithetical to the spirit of the degree. The idea that desiring to embed oneself into an international culture (particularly if learning the language) for a semester, wholly in the spirit of the International and Global Studies ethos, could likely bar you from undertaking further research in that exact field, seems ludicrous. Alongside this, incentivising students to participate in short-term exchanges in order to allow enough space for Honours also seems counter-intuitive to the degree's academic thrust, and when compared to the significant emphasis placed on exchange within the advertising material and promotion of the program, seems a bizarre and inadequate solution. Indeed, when in 2019 the issue of semester exchanges was first raised, and the question of who wanted to take a semester exchange was asked, the significant majority of students in the Seminar at the time answered in the affirmative. It is clear then that if the University wishes to see further research taken in the INGS field, the clash between semester exchange and Honours must be rectified.

(c). COVID Exchange Changes: There seem to be a significant portion of students who are unclear as to the requirements for exchange now that COVID has halted international travel. While there has been email communication from the Degree Director on this being replaced by 12 credit points of electives, the number of student submissions expressing lack of certainty on this seems to highlight a lack of permeation in the understanding of this change in degree requirements.

3. Internship Unit

The sudden and unannounced disappearance of the INGS4004 Internship Unit, is a significant issue for the INGS Student Cohort. This internship option for 4th was featured heavily in promotion material for the degree, and from the submissions received and conversations had with students, played a significant part in the enrolling in this program for a large number of students. Featuring in the archived 2018 and 2019 INGS Handbooks, and only disappearing in the 2020 version, this unit was dropped from the INGS Program without *any* communication to the cohort. Most students only found out about this when attempting to find the unit in their 4th Year enrolment, and came up blank.

When inquiring about this, a student was informed over email by academic staff that the change had been explained at the 2019 INGS Student Information Seminar. However, having consulted audio, video, and the published written material of the seminar, it is clear that the removal of the unit *was never explicitly stated in this seminar*. While the unit did not show up in the explanation of 4th year options, its omission in material cannot reasonably be considered the same as an open communication of its unavailability. This is especially true given the fact that:

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1. At the time of the Seminar in 2019, INGS4004 (the INGS Internship unit) was listed as an option for 4th Year study in the official INGS Handbook.
 2. Within the slides of the Seminar presentation (distributed in an email after the fact), in the section outlining the program requirements, was the line “(ii) 24 credit points of advanced coursework including a substantial final-year project or internship;” [underline added]
 3. Within the same set of slides, when talking about 4th Year Advanced Coursework Units (which did not include the INGS4004 Unit), was the line: “More options will be added in 2021.”

As such it seems unreasonable that students should have noticed that the internship had been permanently removed, especially considering that it was admitted earlier during the seminar by staff that the 4th Year was still under construction. That there was also strong emphasis on consulting the current Handbook for information (which included INGS4004) as a take-home message during this seminar lends further weight to this point.

4. FASS4901 Intensive Unit

A particularly serious issue for INGS students is that of the FASS4901 Intensive Unit. This is a unit that is mandatory for INGS students who undertake Advanced Coursework in 4th Year. It requires students to be available full-time Monday to Friday for a month in either February or July in an unpaid capacity, before being able to complete the university coursework section of the unit.

This requirement is completely out of line in regards to the needs of students to work and provide for themselves. Students undertaking this unit are adults, a large percentage of which are working to support themselves and pay for the maintenance of their lives and livelihoods. To mandate them to be available full-time in an unpaid capacity outside of normal university semester times during a global pandemic in order to satisfy their graduation requirements, *with no clearly outlined alternative* is highly concerning and has caused untold stress for a number of students.

Alongside this, the risk of requiring students to possibly jeopardise their employment in a time of unprecedented casualisation and eroded workers rights (ironically topics covered in INGS core units) by requesting up to a month off work for a mandatory subject, is highly inappropriate and against the educational principles illustrated within the INGS program itself.

While this is not managed under the INGS Program, and is managed specifically and exclusively by the FASS, it still affects every INGS student taking Advanced Coursework, and as such must be addressed here.

5. Dissolution of the INGS Student Representative

The dissolution of the INGS Student Representative Position in 2021 is completely unacceptable.

This position is crucial for advocating for the interests of students in the INGS degree, and to have it dissolved completely removes the ability for INGS students to meaningfully interact in an official capacity with administrative staff. Adding to this is the fact that the INGS degree is evidently highly necessitating such advocacy, considering the issues students have faced in the past and are continuing to face within the progression of their degree. Such a situation makes the removal of the position even more damaging.

There has been no communication of this decision in any official capacity to the INGS student cohort. Student knowledge of this decision stems exclusively from a single email received by an inquisitive student who had wished to apply for the position this year and was unsure whether applications were open. Indeed many students would be completely unaware of it, if it were not for the movement that aimed to bring this report into being. This is an incredible lapse in transparency and accountability, and is indicative of the lack of open channels of communication for INGS students regarding decisions made by the university.

6. Elective Framework

Many students have given feedback that the INGS Degree structure is too constrained in its requirements, with minimal space for electives or buffer space for major or minor switching. This is particularly the case when partnered with the Credit Point Cap issue regarding Honours admission. Students who are unsure of their major or minor choice from Year 1 Semester 1 have an extremely limited amount of space to rectify their academic progression lest 4th Year consequences bar them from options.

However, arguably more crucial than the limited framework itself is the lack of communication of this fact in early years, especially for 1st years or prospective students. With the degree promotional material focusing on the interdisciplinarity of the degree, its broad spectrum of analysis and perspectives, and the emphasis on broader educational foundations, partnered with a lack of accessible and clear information for students within the Handbook, renders the lack of communication as a catalyst for academic issues in later years.

7. Dalyell Scholars

Students in the Dalyell Scholars stream have had particular trouble navigating the requirements and peculiarities of this degree, again with a limited channel for support. The addition of 12 Credit Points of Dalyell units, with only the removal of 6 Credit Points of OLE requirements, has led to

many students being over the Credit Point Cap for entry to Honours. This is another example of the lack of clear information regarding INGS requirements, as students were not informed that this might be an issue from the outset. There appears to be seemingly little recourse for students who have exceeded this cap.

8. Language Cultural Units

The requirement for INGS students to complete cultural units in their Language minors has been a point of contention, confusion, and contradictory information for many years now, and continues to cause issues for students. While it is unclear where the idea originally stemmed from, the notion that INGS students were exempt from the cultural unit requirements of language minors was a persistent one in 2018 and 2019. This was reinforced when the question of whether this was true was asked during the 2019 INGS Student Information, to which it was answered by academic staff: “Language units only. Culture units can’t be counted in the Language Minor for INGS.”

This has been proven not to be the case, and cultural units are required for INGS students to complete their Language minors. However, because of the persistence of this idea, and its seeming confirmation by official academic staff during an information seminar, there is still significant confusion around this issue.

9. Staff Responsibility

An issue that many students feel very strongly about is the burden taken on by members of academic staff to deal with the problems outlined in this section because of a lack of dedicated academic support staff. Professor James Curran and Dr Rohan Howitt are particularly referenced in this, however staff from many departments and schools have also been put under the undue strain of helping students navigate academic progression problems despite it not being their responsibility nor their field of expertise. With no clear pathway for the resolution of these issues, and a lack of meaningful help from institutional avenues such as the Student Centre (discussed in more detail below), academic and teaching staff have been placed in the position of providing administrative support outside of regular means. This is compounded by a lack of information available to staff on the specifics of INGS requirements, often leading to contradictory or incorrect information being given unintentionally, leading to long and complicated email chains soaking up time and causing stress for both students and staff.

It is for this reason that we do not seek to attack staff in any way in this report, as we understand the catalysts for the issues outlined to be a lack of proper frameworks and structures, and as such not the fault of individual staff or academics.

10. Student Centre

Complementing the problem above is the lack of knowledge, and therefore lack of support, present in the Student Centre for INGS students. Again, we understand this not to be the fault of the individual Student Centre workers and advisors, but a structural deficiency that has ill-equipped those within the centre to deal with the intricacies of this degree structure. A great number of students have reported that, while sometimes offering useful general advice, very little is known about INGS specific queries within the Student Centre, necessitating contact with academic advisors which again often channels back into email communication with either Dr Curran or Dr Howitt, or with other staff members.

11. Scholarships

A concerning issue raised in student consultation is that of the impact of INGS Program academic restructuring potentially voiding scholarship requirements. This is in the context of situations during which INGS students have been informed of necessary changes to their academic progression in order to graduate with the INGS specific requirements (deficiencies in which may have arisen outside the control of the student for any or many of the reasons outlined above), and are as part of these changes, required to study only part-time. For students who hold scholarships which require full-time study to remain eligible, this can mean potentially jeopardising their scholarships. Such scholarships include those awarded to students facing financial hardship or disadvantages, such as the University of Sydney Access Scholarship, or the Sydney Scholars Award on Equity and Hardship Grounds.

Students in this situation have been therefore threatened with the termination of their scholarships, leading to significant and understandable distress. This is particularly the case for recipients of scholarships based on equity or hardship criteria.

With the possibility of degree restructuring occurring because of increased understanding of academic requirements, or because of action to rectify the aforementioned issues within the INGS stream, it is possible this issue will affect more students if unaddressed.

12. Sydney Student Enrollment

A final specific issue identified is that of issues with INGS-specific enrolment through Sydney Student. Many students have highlighted significant issues with enrolling into INGS-mandated units, particularly within Language minors, because of a seeming absence of the INGS requirements being integrated into the system. This can take the form of missing units of study, students being barred from enrolling within a necessary unit despite having completed all pre-requisites, and the like.

The complexity of solving these issues is multiplied by the multidisciplinary and multi-departmental nature of this degree, therefore often requiring students to coordinate responses across different departments or schools. Many students have reported the process leaving them stressed, anxious, and unsure as to their academic progression.

It is important to note that the majority of these issues tended to stem from students who entered their Language Majors from the intermediate or advanced stream, therefore requiring more specific academic tinkering.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Having outlined the above problems highlighted in student consultation, the next section will focus on proposed recommendations to rectify the above specific and overarching issues. We hope these recommendations will again form a baseline and a launching pad from which other changes can be made.

1. Consistent Student Consultation

The first and most important recommendation outlined in the feedback is that consistent, in-person student consultation should occur throughout the process of implementing the below recommendations. It is crucial that, considering students are the ones being affected by these issues and have the experience of knowing where the current systems have failed to address them, they play a genuine collaborative role in finding solutions. Whether this take the form of broad seminar-type consultation sessions or INGS Representative-driven meetings, this is a crucial first premise.

2. Response & Information Packet (Handbook Update)

In response to the tabling of this report, we recommend an official response from the appropriate departments/schools/faculty be released to INGS students detailing the acknowledgement of the issues outlined above, and the proposed actions to be taken to rectify them. Alongside this should be an information booklet or packet distributed to INGS students that responds to the questions and issues which require further clarification above.

As part of this, there should be a sizeable update to the INGS Handbook as soon as possible, so it reflects the most up to date, thorough and clear information for INGS students. Having this information integrated into the one, definitive source of information is crucial for allowing INGS students to make informed academic decisions.

3. Reinstatement of INGS Student Representative

Following from this is the demand for the immediate reinstatement of the INGS Student Representative Position *for 2021 and beyond*.

This has not been framed as a recommendation but as a demand, because of the immediate importance of this position to INGS students, and the complete lack of genuine reasons given for its dissolution in the first place. The INGS Student Representative is crucial for providing a voice for the INGS cohort, especially during a time like this where changes are needed thick and fast.

Alongside this is a call for an open explanation as to why the position was dissolved in the first place. INGS students deserve to know why their representative position was removed without any consultation or communication to them.

4. Support & Communication

The following are specific recommendations created with the intention of improving the level of support for INGS students, and increasing the openness and accessibility of INGS-related communications from the university administration and academic staff.

(a). INGS Academic Advisor: This is a crucial recommendation that underpins much of the report laid out so far, and the following recommendations. It is essential that INGS has its own dedicated Academic Advisor whose position is to provide accurate, clear, unilateral advice that can be accepted with complete confidence by students, and organise effective solutions in the event of problems. This would need to replace the hodge-podge of systems that are being utilised at the moment, and take the burden off teaching staff to provide answers and organise solutions to administrative issues.

(i.) Academic Drop-In Sessions: Such sessions should be available with the Academic Advisor for INGS students for regular degree planning and academic progression checks. This is highly important to maintain consistent compliance with the INGS requirements throughout the course of the degree.

(b). Centralised Canvas Site: Another key recommendation, this Canvas site should be open to all INGS Program students. It should serve as a centralised place where both 1. Academic and administrative staff announce changes or updates to the degree, or other related messages, and 2. Where INGS students can seek help and discussion both from staff and from fellow INGS students. Its importance and effectiveness lies in its centrality and complete accessibility to the whole cohort.

(i.) Open updating: As part of this increase in communication and transparency, whenever a change is made to the degree is made by academic or administrative staff on any level, a cohort-wide message should be posted on this new centralised site, an email to the entire cohort sent out. It should contain the overt, specific details of the changes being made, and their implications for students.

(ii.) Written documentation: It should be ensured that when such changes are made to the degree, they are expressed in writing in a manner that is clear and in place that is easily accessible. While seminars and individual consultations are undoubtedly important, in the

event that information affects all members or a significant portion of the cohort, this information should be expressed in a wide-spread written format, so as not to risk portions of the cohort not receiving it.

(c). Flexibility for current students: In order to allow current students to graduate with minimal academic interruption or extension, we ask that more flexibility be implemented in regards to the fulfilling of degree requirements. This should especially apply to students who can show they were given incorrect information regarding such requirements, and are therefore in their current predicament despite following the official advice given to them by administrative or academic staff.

5. 1st Year Communication

While current students from 2nd to 4th Year are likely in the midst of dealing with academic issues (or possibly have already crossed the threshold into problematic academic progression territory), current 1st Year students, and the incoming cohorts for years to come, have some level of control remaining over the progression of their degree. In order to prevent them from falling into the same traps many of the later years inadvertently have, it is imperative they be given thorough guides and advice as early on as possible.

(a). Honours and Electives: First years should be advised of the current Credit Point Cap, and its implications for the selection of elective units throughout their degree, as a matter of priority. This should occur as soon as possible, in order to prevent further academic arising through Semester 2 elective choices.

(b). Access to updated handbook: They should also received a thorough explanation of the INGS Handbook, hopefully to be updated, in order to ensure they understand the complexities of their degree pathway before they undertake it.

6. Feedback Channels

A channel for students to express their concerns and confusions with the INGS stream, or their suggestions for potential changes, should be established and made accessible for students. Whether this occurs through the centralised INGS Canvas Site, or through a separate channel, this should give students the ability to give their feedback and raise issues without having to mobilise in the same way that this cohort and the cohort from 2019 have had to. Student involvement in these issues *is* beneficial to their outcomes, so the establishment of institutional frameworks that acknowledge that will benefit all sides.

7. Honours

The following are a number of recommendations to solve the significant problems regarding Honours. While evidently, not knowing the specifics of the university process and therefore their implementability means these are launchpad suggestions, the spirit and intended outcome of the recommendations should be followed as closely as possible.

- (a).** Waive the Credit Point Cap for Honours entry: This recommendation would solve the issues regarding Honours for all current students. It could be applied for all current INGS students, with the intention of providing a permanent solution for the incoming 2022 intake.
- (b).** Allow mid-year Honours entry: There is currently confusion over whether mid-year Honours entry is allowed. We recommend this be allowed, especially in the context of students who hope to do Honours and have had their degree progression delayed by a semester.
- (c).** Allow second major Honours: This recommendation would allow students to enrol in Honours within the second major that they are enrolled in. It would allow students to complete their academic progression with the flexibility in specialisation that they signed up expecting to have access to.
- (d).** Allow enrolment in Honours after Advanced Coursework completion: Considering a number of students believed Honours could be undertaken after the completion of the INGS Advanced Coursework, it is recommended that the Faculty make this an option for students.

8. Exchange

Issues around exchange have posed many issues to INGS students, and as such there are a number of recommendations proposed to tackle different aspects of the topic.

- (a).** Clear information: Exchange, alongside 4th Year, must take a priority when it comes to clear, accurate, and centralised information. Significant amounts of student time, money, and academic effort is spent on preparation for exchange, making issues that arise from incomplete, incorrect, or a lack of information all the more impactful. This is particularly applicable to protocols within COVID, as uncertainty has risen significantly over the changes to exchange within this period.

Furthermore, thorough explanations of different types of exchange (semester/short term), and how they interact with 4th Year options like Honours and Advanced Coursework, should be more clearly laid out in the Handbook or other centralised sources of information.

- (b).** The following are suggested solutions to the problem of the clash between semester exchanges and Honours within 4th Year:

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- (i).** Run the 3000 level core Global Studies Units concurrently in both Semester 1 and 2: This allows for semester exchanges within 3rd year without jeopardising progression into 4th year smoothly.
 - (b).** Run 300 level core Global Studies Units as intensives in the Summer/Winter holidays: This solves the same problem as the recommendation above, however by shifting the units into holiday intensives
 - (c).** Creation of a comprehensive list of universities/courses that would be accredited INGS units: In order for students to be confident in their INGS unit accreditation (a process [not-INGS-specific] which is notorious for sometimes being confirmed after the deadline for international unit selection), allowing for easier degree progression.
 - (d).** Creation of a dedicated INGS Exchange shell unit: This would create an INGS shell unit for exchange that, while not necessarily linked to the particular topic area of a current INGS unit, is within the bounds of the INGS academic/thematic framework. This would allow for greater unit accreditation flexibility and lessen issues with semester exchange.

9. FASS4901 Intensive Unit

Changes to this unit in the context of the INGS progression are direly needed. Students should not be forced to give up work for an unpaid unit at the possible cost of their livelihood, especially during a pandemic.

- (a).** There should be an option to complete this work during the semester. If this unit must remain compulsory, there should be a clearly accessible way for students to conduct it within the bounds of the regular university semester.
- (b).** This unit should not be compulsory. Forcing students to potentially risk the consequences outlined above should not be a mandatory part of their education. There should be an option to select it or another non-intensive unit in order to satisfy the degree requirements.

10. Internship Units

These recommendations pertain to the now non-existent INGS4004 INGS Scholarship unit that abruptly disappeared without explanation in the 2020 Handbook.

- (a).** Explanation: INGS students (at the very least the cohorts of 2018 & 2019 commencement) should be offered a full explanation as to why a unit they were promised and advertised was dropped without warning or explanation.

(b). Reinstatement: The Faculty should move to reinstate this internship unit, as it forms a key experience for INGS students to understand the real-world implications and applications of their academic teachings.

(c). 1st Year Information: There should be a clear, overt communication to the 1st year cohort that the internship unit will not be offered in 4th year. Some current first students are still under the impression that this unit is an option, and if this is not the case it should be clarified immediately.

11. Dalyell

Students enrolled in the Dalyell Scholars program are at particular risk of overloading their Credit Point Cap as a result of the imbalance structure of the program. They should be specifically warned in advance of the consequences of taking these units, so they can make an informed decision with appropriate foresight.

12. Scholarships

There should be more communication and clarity with students on the possible implications of degree changes in regards to eligibility for scholarships, particularly in regards to full-time and part-time study. This is even more crucial if changes on the above problems are implemented that might mandate part-time study in order to correct graduation schedules.

13. Recognition of Staff Hours

We would like the Faculty to recognise the efforts of staff within the INGS Program, particularly Professor James Curran and Dr Rohan Howitt, for the time and advocacy they have invested in students and student issues. It's clear that they have worked countless hours over their allotted administration hours to help students, and while we as students recognise and thank them for that, we would like recognition from FASS in this respect also.

14. Language Cultural Units

There should be clarification in a centralised space regarding the necessity or non-necessity of completing cultural units within language minors for INGS students. This should be the authoritative, correct advice.

15. Sydney Student

The specific requirements for the INGS Program should be loaded into Sydney Student in order to avoid enrolment issues with each update to the program. This is especially needed in regards

to Language Major and Minor requirements, with focus on students beginning at the intermediate and advanced pathways.

Conclusion

We hope this report has been thorough in its explanation of some of the main issues identified by the INGS cohort as of May 2021, and our recommendations for their alleviation. We also wish this to be a springboard for further action and improvement on the degree which we hope to be the best it can.

Warm regards,

The student community of the Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Advanced Studies (International and Global Studies), as of May 2021.

5. APPENDIX

Student Survey Submissions

In the interests of student anonymity, the survey submissions have been omitted from this version of the report. However if they will help with the understanding or implementation of this report, please email jmcc9139@uni.sydney.edu.au for an anonymised collation of them.