

Faculty of Arts ASAC Meeting

Meeting 1: Tuesday 5th May 2026

Minutes taken by Linah Tan

Co-chairs: Beth Driscoll, Billy Chen, Cori Rushdi, and Fachry Frisandi

Other staff in attendance: Mathilde Lochert, Jennifer Balint, Alexandra Dane, Kellie Frost, CQ Quinan

Beth Driscoll: Introduction and overview of ASAC, new version for 2026 but the main focus is to ensure the student voice is continued to be heard and we have invited Faculty staff to hear these opinions and give feedback. Critical robust debate welcome as well as critiques, challenges, but let's be supportive at the same time

ASAC student co-chairs introduction and summary of agenda items of all student submissions.

Topic 1: Address the theory–practice gap in coursework (Student co-chairs)

Fachry – what we've heard from student feedback/conversations – coursework feels theoretically heavy and less grounded with what is happening practically – what we want to explore is where the theory practice gap shows up, the solutions we can think of to bridge this gap. What are some of the challenges that FoA students face to bridge the theory and practice gap? What are the solutions?

Student – make a differentiation between subjects first, for example mine is philosophy/psychology – some subjects are just theoretically heavy, a lot of content is theory, but practicum applications really encouraged the students more in some subjects. Theory is something that students feel like they need to do, learn, but when you motivate students to learn, they engage better

Student – some subjects are theory heavy, it's ok to read, but our expectations after masters is to get a job, with our course, we don't get to practice the theories we learn in class. We have less discussions and just learn more theory – how to bridge this

Student – the reason we learn theory is to build skills, for example having a mock UN forum, theory is about having a solid foundation/ideas about what's happening so when you do go out to forums, you are prepared. These activities are fun and engaging, but time -consuming for staff to get students to practice, also not all students will engaged if they haven't prepared doing the theoretical readings.

Fachry – We need a balance, there should be a balance between theory and practical skills

Student – it is important to focus on theory and concentrate on the information, but a lot of practical initiatives are voluntary. Most students don't have the opportunity to go out and meet other students and to engage with these things that will help them with their degree. E.g. biomed students partner with the Good Friday appeal and it's a set activity, that would be good in Arts

Students – in our Masters course, we think the balance is quite good, we get to do a range of tasks that apply to real life situation, e.g. we have an AV component where we get to go out and use editing tools, but sometimes this can be overwhelming to learn too many practical skills. There needs to be a balance but it also depends on what the subject needs

Student – It's a time commitment to engage in other practical activities and initiatives, in order to get that kind of experience, I need some niche activities and that can be the issue with Arts, we are both broad and niche.

Fachry – we need a bit more engagement and opportunities to engage with real world projects

Student – partnering with opportunities for placements with organisations would be helpful for undergrad, other students at other universities have more practical experiences than me. For example, working locally for Headspace – I feel like the onus is on me to do the work to reach out, vs at Monash they have actual programs set up with these companies, our uni has none of those opportunities.

Student – networking is sparse here, I've networked more at my part time job than my actual course

Student – capstone involved me reaching out to organisations, they also don't seem to hire international students. We aren't hired from internships, they don't seem to have space. If the Faculty might reach on our behalf, that might be more effective.

Student – part of the reason internships are employable is because you are the person that goes out and seek the opportunity. I went through the first year of my degree not engaging with any initiatives e.g. job ready, and I ended up looking actively for internships and I found one after my second semester and this is something that's a valuable skill that students may have to learn.

Student – I would appreciate more clarity on how academic works inside the university, what does academia look like for those that want more theoretical careers, how can I learn from my teachers what a future in academia would look like? How do they get to where they are?

Student – internships should be competitive and limited, we actually do have fantastic resources that students don't take part of. Accessibility and awareness of these needs to be stressed from the first year. Normally from the first year, they don't know what they want to do or how to make themselves employable. E.g. my friend at RMIT doing the same course, engaging with industry is a

core part of her course. Even if she doesn't go out and pursue a degree, that industry is already her focus and puts her on a good path – that's Important.

Student – my perspective as a postgrad, I recognize that we all have good mentors and peers across degrees, but maybe we can have more connection across ourselves e.g. postgrad can mentor undergrad, or a mixed space for all the Arts degrees to connect, a chance for us to network and give back to undergrad students in a formal and structured way, the postgrad students can actually advise the undergrad on career/job insights

Student – without considering budget, logistics, in undergrad we have the peer mentor program, it's built on one goal which is to help student settle, if there was a similar second year initiative to provide guidance and workshops, expo, that would help students know there was support out there. Sometimes it's just about having the resources that students can go and find which would really help.

Student - In postgrad, we can be practitioners, some of our subjects are too theoretical, and we as practitioners need more strategic things. We are coming from roles that understand theory and we need more practical concepts. Best practice – company visits are a good solution, doing site visits, meeting with management and allowing for international students to network. E.g. in FBE we had a director of a company come and he opened a lot of mindsets for internationals, something similar would be helpful.

Topic 2: Strengthen industry, alumni, and networking pathways

Fachry – some of the students, particularly international, are struggling to navigate Australian markets, need more facilitation and more resources to do so – more initiatives run by Faculty would be helpful – what are the challenges and solutions?

Cori – this idea of clubs and societies, I joined a pro-bono club in my first year and I worked my way up to president, it's opportunities like that which have really give me a good skillset. We partnered with companies directly for training etc and it was also monitored by FBE, why is there nothing similar in Arts? I met a lot of students across degrees from this and it also helped me access internships.

Fachry – in one of my subjects, we invite public/private practitioners to speak to use and tell us what's on the ground. One of the topics is lobbying, and it's great for students to see how the theories is being implemented in the ground. But it's really only this one subject that is doing this, the rest of my subjects are sitting in class, discussing journals, these subjects are a good way for students to gain networking experience.

Billy – part of me feels like you do need to teach students how to cold call, but you're asking a lot

out of young students to go out and find their own internships. As a third year I was lucky to have an internship, but it would be great to have help, it's a steep learning curve and taking rejection is hard

Student – we come from different backgrounds and it's not really inclusive if the only way to get opportunities is to cold call, we want jobs and futures that aren't structured in that way – how do we get those opportunities if we don't have to mold into that personality, there should be other ways.

Student – We are really trying to fix a root cause – there are two students, the extreme students that seek out clubs, seek out exclusive environments etc, but then we have students that don't have that spark or motivation. It would be good to provide more opportunities, mindset and encouragement for students to all do so

Student – In my BA, I realized they have a lot of guest lectures from private/public and they opened a lot of doors for students. For internationals, they can learn about partnering with start-ups, NGOs or agencies can also encourage students to learn real life experiences.

Student – I agree that there are two different kinds of students, which is why my idea to connect undergrad and postgrad to interact would be helpful. We can help undergrads with this knowledge gap, tell them about initiatives and workshops they shouldn't skip, keep encouraging them to take extra steps and build relationships, it also helps with skill-building when students can help each other

Student – I think the two types of students is a bit disingenuous, there's a third who doesn't have the money to pay rent but works hard, which is why we need support, a lot of students are trying their best to just get back so even making these initiatives more accessible to us would be helpful for us. A lot of our supports are overloaded like CAPs, having more support would free up time for students to make these kind of initiatives work in their schedule. E.g. students who work can't attend industry night, so it becomes a choice for us

Student – One improvement is in our tutorials, our professors have lots of experience, they have worked with lots of valuable insights. Why can't they spend 30 minutes in class sharing industry/career insights they have experience to use as a case study. Another way as an international, whatever career expo/exhibition, all are limited for international students due to our work visas etc – sometimes this affects our comfort about how we see ourselves in this industry, we feel unwanted and lowers our self-esteem, the university can potentially address that, ensure these students feel valuable and trusted

Student – I am also international – from my perspective we are interested in doing more government jobs, the grad fair that happened here earlier the semester, most of the opportunities were for domestic students or business/engineering. Even if we ask them directly about spots, they

can't give us a direct answer and it's very demoralizing. It would be good to have a more specific career fair vs a broad career fair.

Student – the visibility of internationals means we need to maybe mix more as we don't get to see other people's perspectives

Student – My background I was blindsided by the amount of programs run by the faculty of arts, it took me about a year to try and drive myself to find opportunities. BA students may not have the exposure to a lot of these initiatives, I had to go out and talk to alumni, taking advantage of the Jobready program which gave me the background to do so, not many students are aware about this.

Topic 3: Clarify Faculty-wide AI practices (Student co-chairs)

Billy – there are quite inconsistent rules about AI in our subjects, some allow and some have a blanket ban, there's a lot of fear about being flagged for AI when we upload our assignments so how can tutors deal with the use of AI in our class. In some subjects we hear that tutors use AI to mark and this is almost a double standard for us if we are told not to use it

Student – People will use AI on assignment as it really can't be flagged in any proper way. If you want to have assessments without AI, they need to be moved back to in-person. But also we should look at how assessments can use AI properly, linking back to that practical aspect in our first point, there's a lot of potential for AI to allow for quantitative data science to be integrated into Arts/Political science.

Student – I have been flagged before, it can be a lot to put your effort into an assignment and be accused of using AI. I'm hesitant about integrating AI into our assignments, there should be more leniency rather than a local adoption of AI. We should accept it exists without pushing it onto our students

Student – In my internship experiences, companies recruit people who know how to use AI properly so I'm pro-AI, it's inevitable to avoid it in the future, we should know how to co-exist with AI and the university should teach students how to use it appropriately.

Student – It would be foolish for every student going into the labor market to not learn to use AI and how to use it, we will fall behind if we don't use it. The later we implement it, the more people will gain an advantage over us

Student – we need to differentiate between two uses e.g. in a Master of Research vs coursework. Research yes, they need to use AI, for coursework, it would be tricky. Maybe we need to look at different ways to do assignments.

Student – for in-person exams, our subject is very theory heavy and assignments are heavy – maybe having in-person exams can help address the AI issues.

Student – I saw that a lot of AI cases have increased and the demographics lean more towards international students – how can we best support these kind of students to help them use AI effectively

Student – Students who tend to use AI don't feel supported enough, I've been told Academic skills aren't helpful with this, lecturers just tell us not use AI, it would be helpful to have a standardized platform that analyses/guides us through the AI use

Student – we can all agree the university is in an experimental stage with AI, we need to identify what is useful and the issue is overusing it. We need to try and learn how to use it as a tool or else we will fall behind. We need to know when AI has reached its limit and where personal skills can take over, but also not neglecting it in its entirety.

Student – Universities in HK, they are actually encouraging us to use AI, it might be good to learn the skills, how to prompt AI properly, understanding good and bad AI inputs, it's important for us to learn those things now. I was told one good lawyer who knows how to use AI well is more valuable than an entire team of lawyers. Many law firms now overseas are including job descriptions with understanding AI so it will be a good job skill later.

Student – potentially in the future can we have a university partnered AI program for us to use

Topic 4: Improve student cultural experience and inclusion (Student co-chairs)

Cori – A lot of our course content can be dominated by the West, a lot of diverse/First Nations theories are limited and rushed. I feel sometimes I face a lot of cultural sensitivities in class, I don't think there's proper protocols for our tutors to deal with that.

Video testimonials shown from First Nations students shown about cultural experience/inclusion

Student – I do find that my experience as a Queer student does have similarities, I often find that in some Arts subjects, we rush through concepts that are relatable to me. It would be nice to see a wide range of queer histories/alternative histories that would be approachable for other students.

Sometime I do feel as though I'm always being referred to as my insights in Queer subjects/discussions which can be a bit targeted, but maybe we can move more into a system that moves more into integrating queer histories into our mainstreams, which would help lead to more acceptance and wider practice. It's a bit of a shame how sometimes we can only have Queer discussions that's limited in only our gender studies

Students – I don't really agree that lecturers are 'rushing' or 'shutting off' towards the last two weeks – it's very difficult to talk about philosophy within the current university system. We need to realistic and what can and can't be talked about based on what is actually existent.

Student – to an extent I do understand, with written history it's important to focus on what was happening at the start, but it's also important to cite recent readings which allows for a more critical reading, e.g. sources our lecturers have written or from 2020

Student – even the categorization 'white men' can be problematic – we are often integrating different continents into our studies, and it would be nice to hear about philosophers from the Middle East, but sometimes it's not really relevant to content. It can be hard to draw a line to allow for everyone to have an equal voice, I think this is an infinite issue

Student – as I started as an international student, I think our classrooms aren't really what we think – we are raised in an environment where we shouldn't stand out or cause trouble, which makes me reach out less. We are afraid of what we write compared to local students, but we are compared in the same way as a local student. When I write, I have to think 'how would a local student write this?' – guidelines about AI and its use so we aren't labelled as being 'lazy' and understanding that idea more. We are also assumed to have rich fathers, as evidenced from some of our lecturers, we carry a lot of guilt from our parents, economic pressures. We also have to manage the chance we might not get to stay in this country, there's a lot of tension building in us, so if we appear shy or introverted, from our heart we want everyone to know we are capable, responsible, independent but sometimes we are not able to because of our environment.

Student – most of my lecturer's case studies are based in Australia, most of the students don't actually know what this case was based on 20 years ago, many students can't relate. Having different examples, addressing a growing Asian, global perspective can help.

Wrap-up and Close – Summary of learnings (Professor Jennifer Balint, Dean, Faculty of Arts)

Thanks to our three co-chairs and all our student participants, we are grateful that you've put yourselves forwards to attend and voice your opinions. You sit in our courses and come with

particular expert life experiences, which is what I'm always impressed with. Our classrooms are certainly enriched with you in them. A question raised today – 'what does success look like?', we can think about that for all the areas we looked at today and that's something I'd like to focus on, in addition to what our programs should look like and how can we equip you to have really flourishing careers.