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## **‘The Centre for India Australia Studies at O. P. Jindal University’**

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## **‘The India–Australia Relationship, Education, and the Centre for India Australia Studies at O. P. Jindal Global University’**

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The Centre for India Australia Studies (CIAS) at O. P. Jindal Global University was established to provide an institutional home for sustained academic, educational, and policy engagement between Australia and India from within the Indian higher education system. Where many centres devoted to Australian studies are in North America, Europe, or Australia itself, CIAS is situated within an Indian university and is framed around reciprocity rather than simply to study Australia from afar. CIAS aims to facilitate two-way intellectual exchange, student mobility, and collaborative research across law, governance, policy, and society. In this respect, CIAS aligns with the journal’s emphasis on studying Australia comparatively and in relation to other jurisdictions, including from perspectives located beyond Australia itself.

The establishment of CIAS in 2016 coincided with a period of renewed momentum in the Australia-India relationship. Over the past decade, bilateral ties have strengthened across strategic, economic, and people-to-people domains, with education emerging as a central pillar of engagement. This shift has been reflected at the highest political level, with successive prime ministerial statements emphasising the centrality of education, skills, and institutional partnerships to the broader bilateral relationship.<sup>2</sup> Scholarly assessments further suggest that a

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Joint Statement on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and Australia*, 4 June 2020, para 31, [www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32729/Joint\\_Statement\\_on\\_a\\_Comprehensive\\_Strategic\\_Partnership\\_between\\_Republic\\_of\\_India\\_and\\_Australia](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32729/Joint_Statement_on_a_Comprehensive_Strategic_Partnership_between_Republic_of_India_and_Australia).

relationship once characterised by intermittent engagement and limited strategic focus has, since the early 2000s, developed greater policy coherence and institutional depth, especially in the period following intensified diplomatic engagement after 2014.<sup>3</sup>

Within this context, universities are now increasingly expected to progress beyond ad hoc collaboration and to invest in sustained institutional partnerships that support student mobility, joint teaching initiatives, and co-produced scholarship. CIAS was conceived as a response to this expectation. Its activities focus on student mobility, curriculum development, research collaboration, and public engagement, and are directed towards the gradual institutionalisation of Australia-India academic relations rather than short-term or transactional engagement.

Education has emerged as one of the most dynamic components of the Australia-India relationship. Australia is among the leading destinations for Indian students pursuing overseas higher education, and education services constitute one of Australia's largest exports to India.<sup>4</sup> More than 137,000 Indian students were enrolled in Australian educational institutions in 2024-25, contributing significantly to Australia's international education sector and to bilateral people-to-people ties.<sup>5</sup> Although these figures are frequently discussed in economic terms, their more enduring significance lies in the long-term interpersonal, professional, and institutional networks that persist well beyond the period of formal study.

Education has for some time represented a tipping point in the bilateral relationship, given India's demographic profile and Australia's established higher

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<sup>3</sup> Pankaj Jha and Shaun Star, "India–Australia: Defining New Horizons of Engagement," *Strategic Analysis* 45, no. 5 (2021): 411–430.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia), *India Country Brief* (2024), [www.dfat.gov.au/geo/india/Pages/india-country-brief](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/india/Pages/india-country-brief) (Accessed on 6 February 2026).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

education capacity.<sup>6</sup> India's expanding tertiary-age population, combined with ongoing reforms to its higher education sector, generates demand for international collaboration in teaching, research, and institutional capacity-building. At the same time, Australian universities increasingly view India not merely as a source of students but as a strategic partner in research, innovation, and transnational education.<sup>7</sup> These complementarities have been recognised in policy frameworks on both sides, including bilateral education councils and formal strategies aimed at deepening institutional engagement.<sup>8</sup>

The significance of education cannot be reduced to student enrolments alone. Student and academic exchanges allow participants who spend time in the partner country to acquire cultural literacy, professional networks, and an informed understanding of legal, political, and social institutions.<sup>9</sup> Over time, such individuals may often occupy influential positions in government, academia, business, and civil society, reinforcing bilateral ties through informal as well as formal channels.<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, CIAS has prioritised reciprocal student mobility, research collaboration, and public engagement. Its flagship India Immersion Programme has facilitated structured academic and experiential programmes for Australian students in India. These programmes combine classroom-based instruction with site visits and practitioner engagement, enabling students to encounter Indian institutions in

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<sup>6</sup> Amit Dasgupta and Shaun Star, "India–Australia Relations: Education as the Tipping Point", *Hindustan Times*, 12 April 2017, [www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/india-australia-relations-education-as-the-tipping-point/story-kgPb9aYml7ozQyztAR5UMN.html](http://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/india-australia-relations-education-as-the-tipping-point/story-kgPb9aYml7ozQyztAR5UMN.html).

<sup>7</sup> C. Raj Kumar and Shaun Star, "There Is Huge Potential in Australia's Education Relationship with India", *The Australian*, 11 December 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Joint Statement on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and Australia*, para 31; Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *An India Economic Strategy to 2035: Navigating from Potential to Delivery* (2018), Education Chapter, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/india/ies/Pages/india-economic-strategy-to-2035>.

<sup>9</sup> Shaun Star, "Internationalisation of Higher Education and Student Mobility", *The Higher Education Review* (June 2018): 1–3

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

practice rather than just in the abstract. Since 2011, more than 700 Australian students have participated in in-person immersion programmes, across more than twenty-nine programmes involving twenty Australian universities. For example, participants have visited the Supreme Court of India, observing courtroom layout, procedures, and daily practice. Students consistently remark on the contrast with Australian courts, describing Indian courtrooms as “much busier”, “more lively”, and involving “many more people”, and express amazement at the sheer volume of cases managed daily by judges and advocates. Students also engaged directly with judges and court registrars to understand how the Indian judiciary is responding to challenges of scale, including through the adoption of technological innovation and digital case-management systems. In this way, the programme exposes students not only to structural constraints, but also to institutional adaptation and reform in practice. These initiatives have been complemented by reciprocal opportunities for Indian students, including immersion programmes in Australia, semester exchanges, and pathways, reflecting a commitment to two-way engagement. As one participant reflected, “The India Immersion Programme was an unforgettable experience and gave me a deeper and more nuanced understanding of India—not only through formal learning, but through meaningful interactions and lived experiences.”

A further dimension of CIAS’s work has been curriculum development aimed at embedding Australian studies within Indian higher education. The Centre developed a course titled *Comparative Australia Studies*, which examined Australia through a comparative lens encompassing culture, society, politics, law, and business. The course was structured to introduce students to Australia not as a standalone case, but as a jurisdiction whose institutions and social practices can be productively compared with those of India and the wider Indo-Pacific region.

Students had the opportunity to interact with guest lecturers from Australia, including academics and practitioners, enabling them to engage directly with contemporary Australian perspectives and to situate Australia within regional and global contexts. For instance, a guest lecture delivered by a faculty member from an Australian partner university examined Indigenous art in Australia from a comparative perspective, placing it alongside artistic traditions from different regions of India and prompting discussion about culture, identity, and representation across postcolonial contexts. In this respect, the course reflects an approach to Australian studies that resonates with the journal's emphasis on comparative, transnational, and outward-looking scholarship, rather than national description in isolation.

Beyond teaching and mobility, CIAS has served as a conduit for institutional and scholarly collaboration. The Centre and the wider University have hosted more than 200 joint conferences, lectures, and seminars with Australian participation. Faculty collaboration has generated a substantial body of joint scholarship, with more than 120 co-authored publications involving academics from Australian universities. These outputs reflect sustained intellectual exchange rather than episodic cooperation and contribute to interdisciplinary scholarship across law, governance, and international relations.

Public engagement has also been central to the Centre's work. CIAS and the University have hosted senior Australian political leaders, ministers, diplomats, jurists, and university leaders for lectures and institutional engagements. These engagements situate academic exchange within the wider setting of bilateral relations and provide students with direct exposure to contemporary Australian public life and policymaking processes.

CIAS does not approach Australia as an object of distant study but as a partner jurisdiction with which India shares democratic values, legal traditions, and regional interests. This orientation aligns with scholarship that emphasises reciprocity, sustained institutional engagement, and people-to-people interaction as central to the development of effective bilateral relationships.<sup>11</sup> The Centre's activities have had both direct and indirect impacts on students, faculty, and visiting policymakers. For instance, alumni of immersion and exchange programmes continue to engage with Australia-India initiatives in their professional lives, while joint research projects have contributed to policy-relevant scholarship and institutional capacity-building.

As India–Australia relations continue to mature, education, and academic collaboration are likely to assume even greater importance. Government strategies in both countries increasingly emphasise skills development, research cooperation, and institutional partnerships as pillars of the relationship. In this evolving landscape, centres such as CIAS contribute to the translation of diplomatic commitments into sustained academic and societal connections, and to the longer-term institutionalisation of bilateral engagement through education and research.

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<sup>11</sup> Jha and Star, "India–Australia: Defining New Horizons of Engagement," 420–421, 425–426, 433–434.

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