



# CASA MELBOURNE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



BROWN



Consortium for  
Advanced Studies Abroad

# **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The CASA Melbourne program offers a unique opportunity for cultural immersion in one of the world's most livable cities. Students discover the theme *'Australia's Place'*, exploring topics relating to Indigenous Australian histories and cultures. Students enrol in courses at the University of Melbourne, Australia's leading university. The program connects students with leading academics and researchers in their field of studies, and offers opportunities to engage with research and internships in their areas of interest.

## **AT-A-GLANCE**

### **ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS**

Students can enrol across multiple disciplines at the University of Melbourne, with opportunities to study courses in Australian and Indigenous studies

### **INTERNSHIPS & RESEARCH**

Students have opportunities to connect with leading academics in their field of studies and undertake internships or research experiences

### **CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

The program curriculum offers meaningful opportunities to connect with Australian Indigenous cultures and histories

### **FEATURE STORY**

Program reflections have highlighted the lasting impacts of the program, particularly in encouraging collaboration with Indigenous communities in aspects of research and study

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Priorities for the future focus on developing research and internship opportunities, community engagement and students resources

# ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

The University of Melbourne is a leading centre for higher education and research in the Asia-Pacific region. CASA Melbourne students are enrolled at the University of Melbourne, and have flexibility to undertake 4 courses in any discipline. Students are encouraged to undertake a course in Australian and Indigenous studies where possible to complement their learning experience from the CASA program.

CASA students have benefited from the diversity of courses on offer, particularly noting the availability of courses in areas of study that are not offered at home institutions. Students have also enjoyed the flexibility to enrol in any areas of study, and the opportunity to receive credit for undertaking research and/or internships.

- 31% of courses undertaken in **Australian studies**
- Each student in the Spring 2024 semester was connected with an **academic mentor**
- CASA program expanded to offer **perspectives from new areas of the University**, including the Indigenous Studies department, and the Indigenous Knowledge Institute.
- A **reflection activity** has been developed which allows students to consider their key takeaways from their experiences in the program.





**40%**

of students undertook a research or internship experience

**20**

participants from six CASA institutions in the 23-24 academic year

**31%**

of courses taken in Indigenous/Australian studies.

**95%**

of students joined a student club/society



# INTERNSHIPS & RESEARCH

CASA Melbourne staff work closely with students to identify opportunities which are aligned to academic and career goals. Students have found these opportunities to be extremely beneficial to developing their global perspectives and gaining cross-cultural experience in their field of study.

## 2023-2024 Research & Internship Placements

**Department of Museums and Collections at  
University of Melbourne**  
*Amherst College, History*

**Australian Institute for International Affairs**  
*Swarthmore College, Political Science*

**Melbourne University Sport**  
*Harvard University, Film Studies*

**Research Unit for Indigenous Languages**  
*Swarthmore College, Linguistics and Computer  
Science*

**Department of Marine Biology**  
*University of Pennsylvania, Biology*



**33%**

increase in new  
community partners

**20%**

increase in internship  
participants

# CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

From the pre-semester orientation through the entire semester, students are provided with meaningful opportunities to engage with the theme 'Australia's Place'. Cultural activities and excursions cover topics relating to Melbourne's place locally and globally, its history and future, Melbourne's links to its Indigenous communities, and its role in the Asia-Pacific region.

## This year's activities and excursions included:

A successful partnership with the **Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Culture**, offering an immersive and engaging orientation program.

**Increased focus on sustainability**, with activities that explore climate change research and marine ecosystems in Melbourne's surrounding regions.

A series of discussions were arranged in Spring 2024, giving students the chance to **hear from leading academics on topics relating to Australia's Place**.

High levels of engagement in **University of Melbourne activities and student groups**, allowing connections to be made with local students.



# REFLECTIONS AND LASTING IMPACTS

The CASA Melbourne program aims to broaden student perspectives on collaborating with Indigenous communities, emphasizing the impact of their actions on the First Peoples and the Traditional Owners of the lands where students live, study, and work. During CASA program activities, students are encouraged to consider the impacts of their work and research on local communities.

Aaliyah, a Spring 2024 participant from Swarthmore College, exemplified how transformative her experiences have been in the program, particularly through changing her perspectives on undertaking research with Indigenous communities. Majoring in Linguistics and Computer Science, the CASA Melbourne staff were able to arrange an opportunity for Aaliyah to intern as a research assistant at the Research Unit for Indigenous Languages (RUIL).



**“I LEARNED ABOUT ISSUES ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES HAVE HAD WITH ACCESSING EVEN DIGITAL ARCHIVES OF THEIR OWN LANGUAGE... WHICH HAS DEVELOPED MY PASSION FOR PLACING COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTER OF LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT”.**

Aaliyah’s experiences working at the RUIL have given her new understandings and perspectives on approaches to language research in Indigenous communities. Aaliyah now emphasises the importance of centering Indigenous communities at the forefront of language technology development. She notes that this experience has reshaped her approach, placing Indigenous perspectives at the forefront of her work.



Similarly, Asher, a Fall 2024 student from Brown University, experienced a pivotal shift in his research approach as a result of his experiences in the orientation program at the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development.

Studying Environmental Science, Asher had previously conducted research on oil rigs off the coast of California without considering the implications for local Indigenous communities. Through the CASA Melbourne program, Asher gained a new perspective on the importance of engaging with Indigenous voices and seeking consent and advice before conducting research. In his program reflection, Asher highlighted this new awareness, emphasising a commitment to considering the impact of his work on affected communities.

These experiences illustrate how the CASA Melbourne program is having transformative impacts on students, with a particular focus on collaborating with Indigenous communities in aspects of research and study.

Student reflections at the end of the semester have emphasized the influence that the CASA program is having on students and the positive impacts this can have on their future endeavors.





# LOOKING AHEAD

As we plan for 2024-2025, we've identified the following priorities for the upcoming academic year in Melbourne:

## **Continue to develop research and internship opportunities**

- Develop partnerships across the University of Melbourne
- Encourage enrollment in for-credit research courses to allow structured opportunities

## **Explore new avenues for engagement at the University of Melbourne and in the wider community.**

- Develop opportunities at regional University of Melbourne campuses
- Increase community engagement for cultural activities in Melbourne and surrounding regions

## **Grow engagement across the Consortium**

- Undertake course mapping with faculty and staff at sending schools
- Share alumnae stories with home institutions

## **Develop materials for students focusing on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

- Create resources that direct students from diverse backgrounds to more specific support services and engagement opportunities

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