

# Submissions in response to the 'Defining the Future' Discussion Paper

Correspondents have been de-identified.

"[In-confidence]" indicates where the correspondent requested their response be kept private.

*The views expressed in submissions are those of individual authors of the submissions only, not those of The University of Melbourne. They are published here so others can discuss them through the consultation process. The University does not sanction commentary on individuals in its consultation processes, and submissions containing comments reflecting on individuals will be returned to the authors for amendment.*

**No. 359**

26 Feb 2010

The VCA Review Committee  
C/- University of Melbourne

By email: [vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au)

Dear Review Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the future of the Victorian College of the Arts. I write to you on behalf of the current VCA Bachelor of Music Theatre Students.

As a group we have come from very different backgrounds and levels of experience to study Music Theatre at the Victorian College of the Arts. All of us however have been drawn here for the same reason; to study our art form intensively, with a focus on practical training, at an elite institution, with access to staff who are active and respected members of the industry, in the arts capital of Australia.

In reference to the Discussion Paper, I offer you the following feedback:

## **Music Theatre**

We came because we believed in the reputation of the VCA and considered the opportunity to be part of a new degree at this famous institution to be both an honour and a privilege that would be foolish to decline. Now, before our first year was even completed, we learn that the value of our degree isn't recognised by the management of the VCA. The suspension of future intake into our degree threatens to compromise its ability to generate any kind of reputation within a highly competitive industry. For these reasons we believe we support the immediate re-instatement of the Bachelor of Music Theatre. Music Theatre is one of the most visible and commercially valuable live art forms in this country and provides numerous employment opportunities to graduates from the VCA as well as comparable institutions around the country. The continuation of the Musical Theatre degree would inevitably mean an increase in the number of graduates entering into commercial Musical Theatre productions. Large numbers of graduates of the WAAPA Music Theatre degree currently fill positions in commercial Music Theatre productions all around the country. Their prevalence in the industry not only cements WAAPA's reputation as an elite training institution, but also draws a high calibre of candidate to their courses year after year. The Music Theatre Degree at VCA has the potential to do the same. The benefits of a respected Music Theatre degree are valuable to the institution as a whole.

On top of their degree WAAPA also offer a one-year, fee paying certificate course to students who wish to develop their skills further before attempting entry into the Bachelor course. We suggest VCA do the same. The profits from this as well as the money gained from the 32 Commonwealth Supported Places already available to the VCA for the purposes of a Music Theatre degree should be used to fund the continuation of a VCA Bachelor of Music Theatre.

## **Curriculum**

We support the retention of the VCA as an elite arts training institution with a focus on intensive, practical, studio-based training and discipline specific theory. VCA should continue to offer degree-award courses across all art streams including Drama, Dance, Music Theatre, Production, Art, Music and Film and Television.

We do not believe there is a need to add 'breadth' to the VCA programs through the introduction of the Melbourne Model. This is not to say that there is no requirement for theoretical and academic learning within our course. In Music Theatre it is already offered through the compulsory subjects of 'Philosophy of performance' as well as through our 'Centre for Ideas' (CFI) subjects. Throughout our first year of study further theory was also offered through subjects in keyboard skills and music theory as well as the anatomy and physiology of vocal production. Text analysis, nutrition and muscular systems were also incorporated into our otherwise practical studies of Acting and Dance. These subjects are not delivered independent of the background and context of the artistic practice or the theoretical principles that underpin them, to suggest otherwise is an insult to the experts who design and deliver them.

We believe giving students access to subjects that broaden their knowledge whilst maintaining the depth of disciplinary excellence should be offered in place of the current compulsory CFI subjects. This should not however occur through an introduction of the Melbourne model, nor should it consume more than 12.5% of the current course load that the current CFI subjects already consume. We feel a restructuring of the Centre For Ideas to offer a range of subjects that broaden students learning but also complement their core studies would be the most desirable form for this to take. The concept of 'breadth' study independent from its connotations within the structure of The Melbourne Model should be about the development of cognitive and analytical processes that can then be applied to practice-based specialisation. It should not be a quick vacation or a hobby on the side of our core studies. That is not what we came to the VCA for.

We believe any further move away from the intensive, studio-based training in defined areas of specialisation threatens the ability of VCA's students to compete with graduates of other schools like NIDA and WAAPA, and would make VCA graduates less work-ready. This would in turn impact upon arts business by causing a decline in the availability of Victorian-based graduate artisans with the skills required to enter the workforce.

We do support regular curriculum review at VCA to ensure the College continues to meet the rapidly changing demands of students and their future employers. All reviews should include extensive consultation with all stakeholders and operate independently from VCA and University of Melbourne (UoM) management.

## **Funding & Structure**

We support the view that the optimum outcome for VCA is to be an independent institution, capable of awarding its own degrees and managing its own curriculum.

Accordingly, we suggest that direct Arts Ministry funding (through inclusion in the Australian Roundtable program) at levels comparable to NIDA, is the best hope for a financially sound, independent VCA. We encourage the UoM to aggressively pursue this option, drawing upon the great public and industry interest in VCA evident in recent times.

In the interim, we support calls for the Federal Government to immediately reverse the 2005 \$5m p/a funding cut to VCA. We believe the Federal Government is putting great strain on both the University and VCA by holding off on this review until 2012, and is thereby threatening elite arts education in Australia.

We also support calls for the Victorian Government to commit to sustained funding for VCA to supplement the Federal contribution. We support the Victorian Shadow Minister for the Arts' suggestion that this sum be in the ballpark of \$6m p/a or alternatively in the guise of a sustained contribution to VCA infrastructure development.

We support the demerger of UoM Music and VCA Music from the 2011 academic year. We believe this outcome would return choice to the music education sphere, so that students can choose between a Melbourne Model based degree with strong ties to scholarship and research (UoM Music) and completely practical, studio-based training (VCA Music). Demerger would also address the unworkable constraints of having two music campuses. We support this demerger regardless of whether VCA remains a faculty of the University or becomes independent.

As secondary structural options, we would also support investigation of VCA being transferred to another University that was willing to retain the practical nature of VCA's courses OR VCA becoming an autonomous

VET institution. In either case, the Federal and State Governments would need to recognise the unique cost of providing elite arts education and fund VCA's new guise appropriately.

We support the pursuit of new income streams (e.g. extended post-graduate programs, open programs, pursuing international students) and believe VCA's best chance of obtaining this income is by committing to the supply of intensive, studio-based training which is most attractive to the arts education marketplace. The pursuit of international students needs to be should be conducted through the same audition process and include a cap of no more than %10 of the student body so as not to limit opportunities to local students.

### **Leadership**

We are concerned the current senior leadership of Victorian College of the Arts & Music does not necessarily represent the views of the current staff and students. As such, we would support a review of VCAM management as part of any structural and/or funding changes, with particular preference for allowing students and staff a direct say in appointments of the Dean, Deputy Dean and Heads of School.

We support a greater, active involvement by both the Victorian State and Federal Governments at VCA, to ensure Australia's arts education and arts business landscapes are better safeguarded than has been evident throughout 2009.

### **Accountability**

We would urge the University of Melbourne to address contraventions of the Heads of Agreement that merged UoM with VCA. Particularly:

- Reinstating the VCA name.
- Reinstating the VCA logo.
- Reinstating VCA's unique graduation ceremony.
- Reversing the alignment of VCA and UoM's funding arrangements, which was not due until the fifth year of integration.
- And in the interim of VCA's future being decided, UoM should allow VCA "to continue to exercise high levels of autonomy over the conduct and future development of its educational programs [including] the VCA's commitment to provide individual and small group tuition within an arts practice environment with an emphasis on context, performance, production and exhibition and with studio practice as its core."

### **Students & Staff**

We express concern that many talented and valuable teaching staff will not be returning to VCA in 2010.

We also express concern that suggestions the Melbourne Model would be applied to VCA, and news of staff leaving, may have impacted upon VCA's attractiveness to high calibre applicants.

As such, we would support new mechanisms to actively retain quality staff, such as formal, quarterly opportunities for VCA staff to supply feedback to VCAM Management (both anonymously and publicly).

We would also encourage a renewed drive to attract high calibre students as part of any 're-launch' of an independent VCA, through emphasising the College's continued commitment to providing 100% practical education across the entire arts spectrum.

### **Future**

We look forward to VCA emerging from the turmoil of the last year as a stronger institution, capable of answering student demand for the highest level of intensive, wholly practical-based, studio training across the entire arts spectrum. We are confident the protection of this ideal will ensure VCA graduates will continue to have the best chance of making a career in one of the most competitive industries in the country. In doing this, we also support

**No. 360**

[Committee only]

1 March 2010

**No. 361**

Dear Review Committee,

4 March 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the future of the Victorian College of the Arts. I write to you as a current third year Fine Art Photography student.

In 2008 I enrolled in the VCA's Bachelor of Fine Art course after also being accepted into Fine Arts at RMIT and Monash University, on the basis of its internationally revered reputation of excellence in practical and theoretical intensive, specialist training, delivered in a practical amount of time.

I would like to strongly contest the assumption represented in Melbourne University's statements to the media that the VCA's practiced-based model for education is somehow unbalanced or lacking intellectually and in need of replacement.

Practical training does not and has not excluded academic involvement at the VCA. Practise & Performance as research or *for* research has long been accepted by the international arts community as of equivalent importance to other research models. I refer the Committee to the website of The Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies ([www.adsa.edu.au](http://www.adsa.edu.au)) which, as the peak academic body in the region, clearly recognises the importance of practice to academia. Learning by doing is not a pipe-dream.

In the VCA I have found an institution striving to serve the parallel and co-dependant career paths of artists and academics. During my time as a student I have witnessed only the highest commitment from staff and students alike to being *both* a cutting-edge place of training and also of research. I would suggest that any failure to deliver graduates of less than world class – and there has been no evidence of this to date – would be a failure caused by systematic under-resourcing, rather than a failure of ideology or curriculum.

In reference to the Discussion Paper, I offer you the following feedback:

### **Review Committee**

I am concerned that only 2 of 9 staff and student representatives on the Review Committee were elected to their position. I am especially concerned that four unelected Heads of School are on the Committee, one of whom is Deputy Dean. Three of these Head of School are on the public record endorsing the merger and the Melbourne Model, whilst having little or no experience of pre-merger VCA. Clearly this composition casts doubt on the Review's independence and risks current staff and students self-censoring their submissions to the Review for fear of a real or perceived threat of repercussions for their work and study life. I ask the Chair to replace the 7 unelected staff and student representatives with those directly elected by the current VCAM staff and students (from a selection of volunteer candidates as opposed to the Dean and Vice Chancellor choosing the candidates). I ask the Chair to consider adding an alumni representative to the panel.

### **Curriculum**

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### **I do not believe there is a need to add 'breadth' to the VCA programs through the introduction of the Melbourne Model.**

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In the interim, I support calls for the Federal Government to immediately reverse the 2005 \$5m p/a funding cut to VCA. I believe the Federal Government is putting great strain on both the University and VCA by holding off on this review until 2012, and is thereby threatening elite arts education in Australia.

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### **Students & Staff**

I am concerned that many talented and valuable teaching staff have not returned VCA in 2010, and that there positions have not been adequately replenished despite a noticeable increase in the intake of first year students. The photography department has lost three staff members this year, leaving us with only two Sessional Technicians, one permanent & two Sessional Lecturers for Studio Studies, shared between over 60 Bachelor of Fine Art students, in addition to Honours, Masters & Post Grad students. I am concerned that the technical, conceptual and professional learning outcomes of the photography department are becoming condescended. I would like to see more funding available to all departments for increased permanent & sessional staff placements and more contact hours.

I also express concern that suggestions the Melbourne Model would be applied to VCA, and news of staff leaving, may have impacted upon VCA's attractiveness to high calibre applicants.

As such, I would support new mechanisms to actively retain quality staff, such as formal, quarterly opportunities for VCA staff to supply feedback to VCAM Management (both anonymously and publicly).

I would also encourage a renewed drive to attract high calibre students as part of any 're-launch' of an independent VCA, through emphasising the College's continued commitment to providing 100% practical education across the entire arts spectrum.

### **Future**

I look forward to VCA emerging from the turmoil of the last year as a stronger institution, capable of answering student demand for the highest level of intensive, wholly practical-based, studio training across the entire arts spectrum. I am confident the protection of this ideal will ensure VCA graduates will continue to have the best chance of making a career in one of the most competitive industries in the country. In doing this, we also support a vibrant Australian artistic culture and ever-expanding arts business.

The function performed by the Victorian College of the Arts in the Performing Arts cannot be fulfilled by WAAPA or NIDA. The disparate orientations of each of the three elite drama schools – NIDA, WAAPA *and the VCA*, produce graduates of completely different kinds. The continued contribution of a diverse range of artists is fundamental to the future of the Arts in this country. The VCA is distinctive and it cannot be replaced.

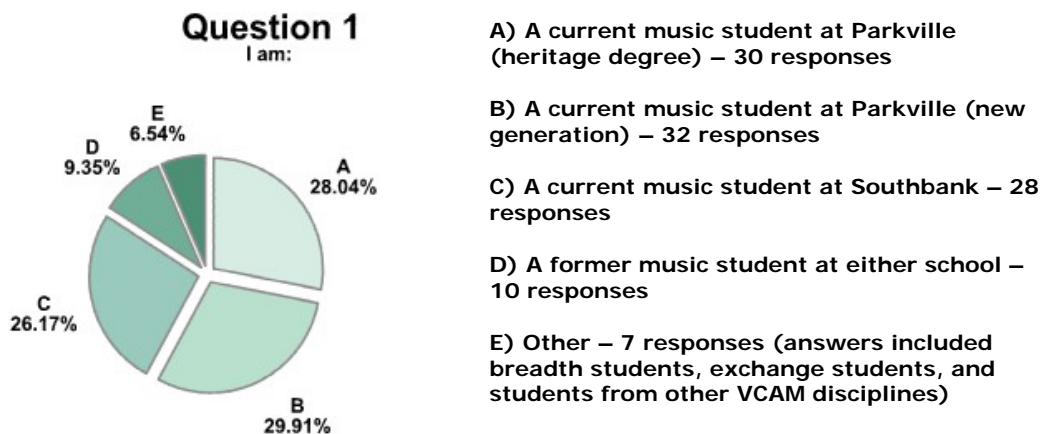
No. 362

# SUBMISSION TO VCAM DISCUSSION PAPER 'DEFINING OUR FUTURE' Melbourne University Music Students' Society

## 1. Introduction

This submission reflects the concerns of the Melbourne University Music Students' Society ('MSS'), a Student Union affiliated representative body for students at the School of Music. The MSS has historically been based at Parkville, but is constitutionally required to represent all music students at the University, which, since the merger of the music schools in April 2009, has included Southbank music.

Our submission is based on a survey of the student body at both campuses of the School of Music. This survey was advertised to all music students, and received 109 responses, including 64 Parkville students (31 of which are heritage degree students, and 33 of which are New Generation students) and 28 Southbank students, as well as 10 alumni of either school, and 7 who did not fall into any of these categories (generally exchange students and breadth students). This survey has been supplemented by our own experiences as students and as representatives at the Parkville campus.



**Figure 1: Survey demographics**

We have structured our submission around areas of concern rather than the questions in the Discussion Paper, and we have included both general discussion of what students want as well as recommendations based on our impression of these opinions. Note, however, that we base our recommendations on what we feel is best for Music, so some of our recommendations may not be best for VCAM overall, and that we have made this decision on limited information, not having access to many of the financial documents that detail the division of funds between each discipline.

These recommendations are summarised as follows:

- That continued efforts should be made to secure an independent source of government funding for the VCA
- That if no independent source of funding can be obtained, we are open to a merger of the Music schools only if it is done in a manner that
  - preserves or expands the curriculum choice students currently have (including the provision of enough subjects to ensure that these choices can be exercised),
  - is transparent and adequately informs students, especially teach-out students, of how the changes affect them, and
  - overcomes the significant practical difficulties, such as travel time between campuses, of such a merger.

- That we do **not** support a merger of all arts disciplines unless each has significant autonomy with regards to their budget, administration, and curriculum
- That the quality of education (whether academic or practical) be the paramount consideration in any decision made about the Faculty.

These recommendations are explained below.

## 2. Curriculum

### *A. Student opinion on degree structure*

Because we feel that the most important outcome of any decision about the VCA and Music is its effect on the quality of education, we decided to collect data on student opinions about curriculum. Students were surveyed on what they thought a music degree should ideally contain, and then invited to consider how well these needs were met by their current degree. We divided the options into 5 possible different types of subjects:

- instruction in the area of specialisation (such as private composition or performance classes or dissertation supervision)
- subjects that directly supported specialist instruction (such as ensembles and orchestral repertory for instrumentalist, acting and diction for singers, electroacoustic music for composers, or research opportunities for musicologists, therapists, and ethnomusicologists)
- broader music skills (such as history and theory)
- professional development (such as internships or placements)
- subjects outside of music, i.e. breadth

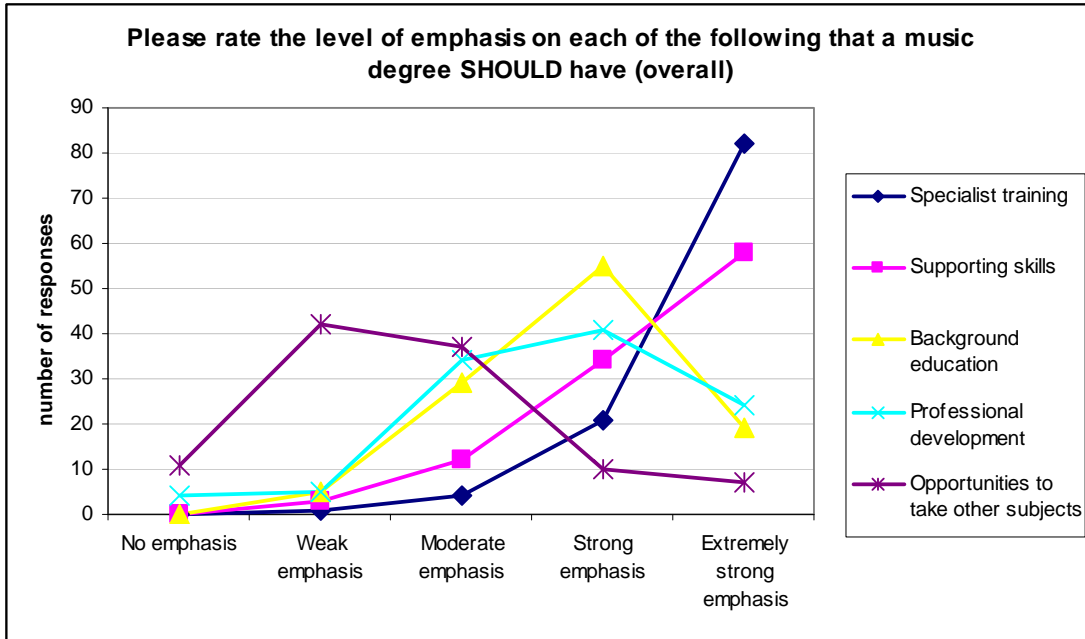
Students overwhelmingly selected their specialisation as the most important component of their degree, regardless of which campus they studied at, or whether they studied an academic or practical specialisation. Most at both campuses also noted that they were relatively happy with the specialist training they received, although a significant number of comments mentioned insufficient lesson time and performance opportunities.

A large number of students also placed great importance on supporting skills and professional development. However, students were far less likely to be happy with the opportunities available in this category. This was more pronounced for Parkville students, both heritage and new generation, while Southbank students were generally more positive about the opportunities offered by their degree. Singers and musicologists at Parkville, in particular, noted how often that classes which were intended to teach such skills did not run.

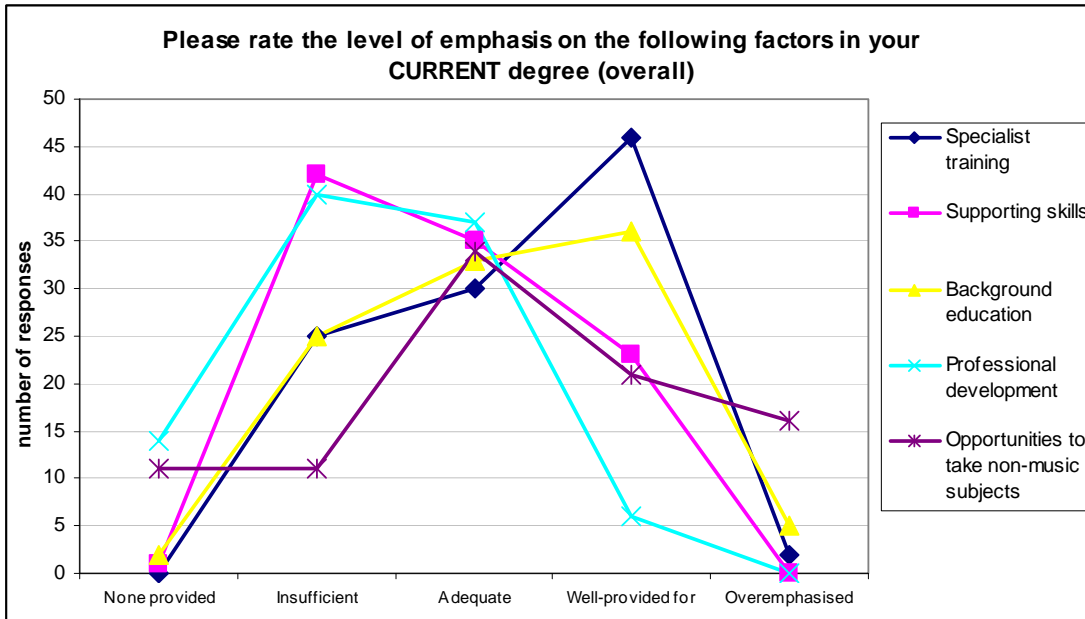
Southbank students were likely to support a moderate emphasis on historical and theoretical background, while Parkville students supported a slightly stronger emphasis. Similarly, Southbank students were more likely to want a weaker emphasis on non-music subjects.

Both Parkville and Southbank students thought that breadth was the least important component, although most thought that the emphasis should be weak rather than non-existent. In particular, those enrolled in the Parkville new generation degree believed that non-music subjects were overemphasised in their degree. We would infer that many of them enrolled in this degree in spite of, rather than because of, the number of non-music subjects in the degree. However, Parkville heritage degree students, who still have a breadth requirement, albeit a smaller one of 2-4 subjects rather than 6, were generally happy with their opportunities to take non-music subjects. This would to us suggest that it is not the idea of breadth that is a problem for Parkville students, but the quantity of it, and the effect it has in excluding more music subjects. This would seem supported by the fact that new generation students were much less happy with the quantity of background education provided. Many respondents commented that they would like the opportunity to take professional development and non-music subjects, but strongly opposed making them compulsory for all students.

The results are as shown below:



**Figure 2: Overall opinions on ideal degree**



**Figure 3: Overall opinions on current degree**

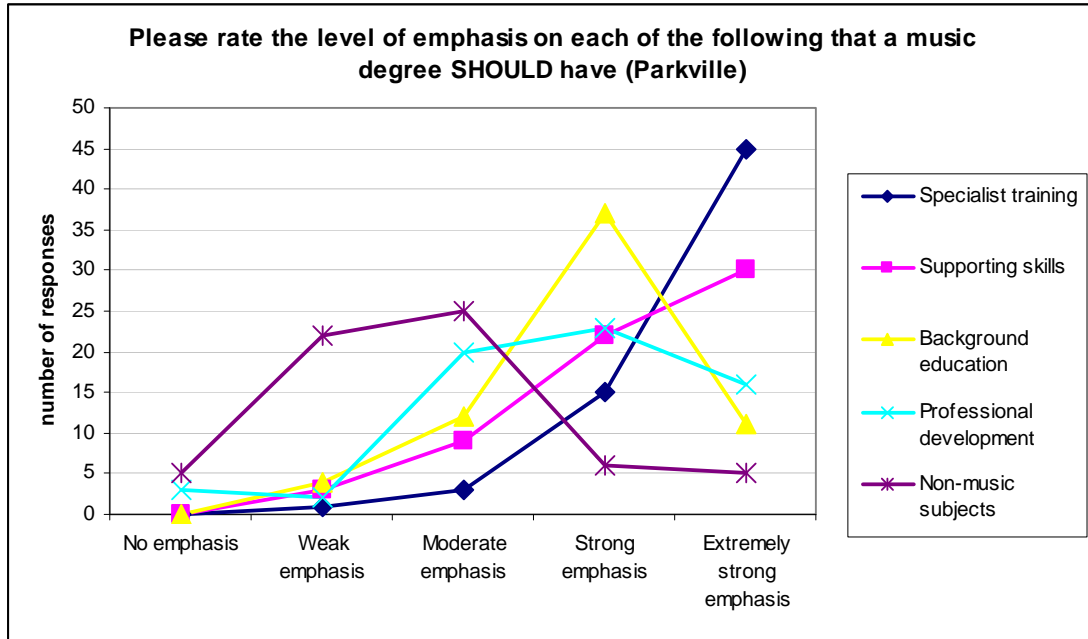


Figure 4: Parkville students' opinions on ideal degree

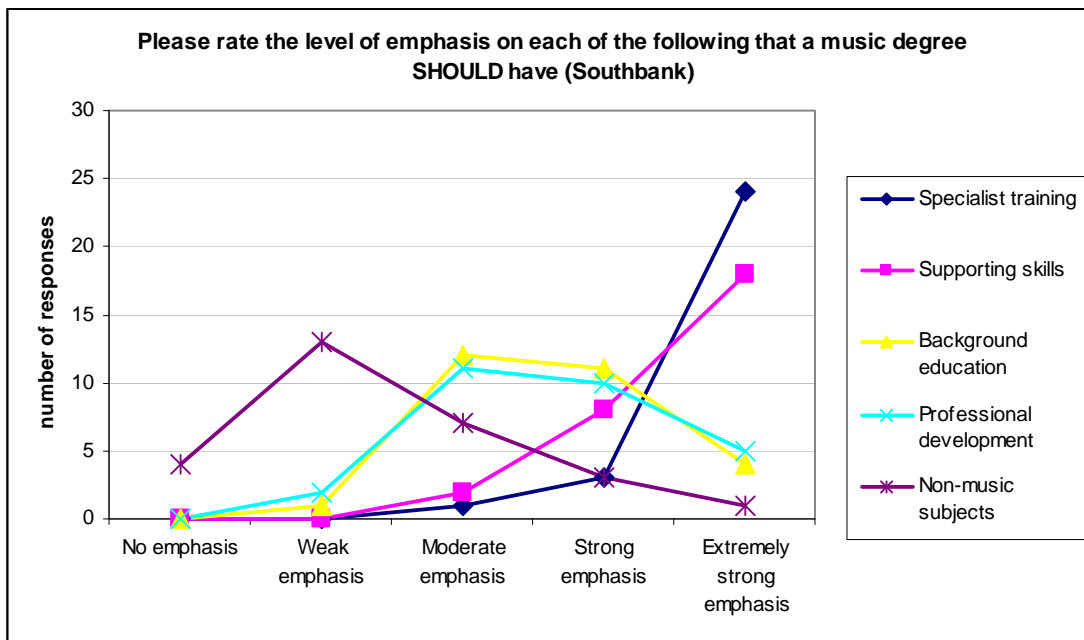


Figure 5: Southbank students' opinions on ideal degrees

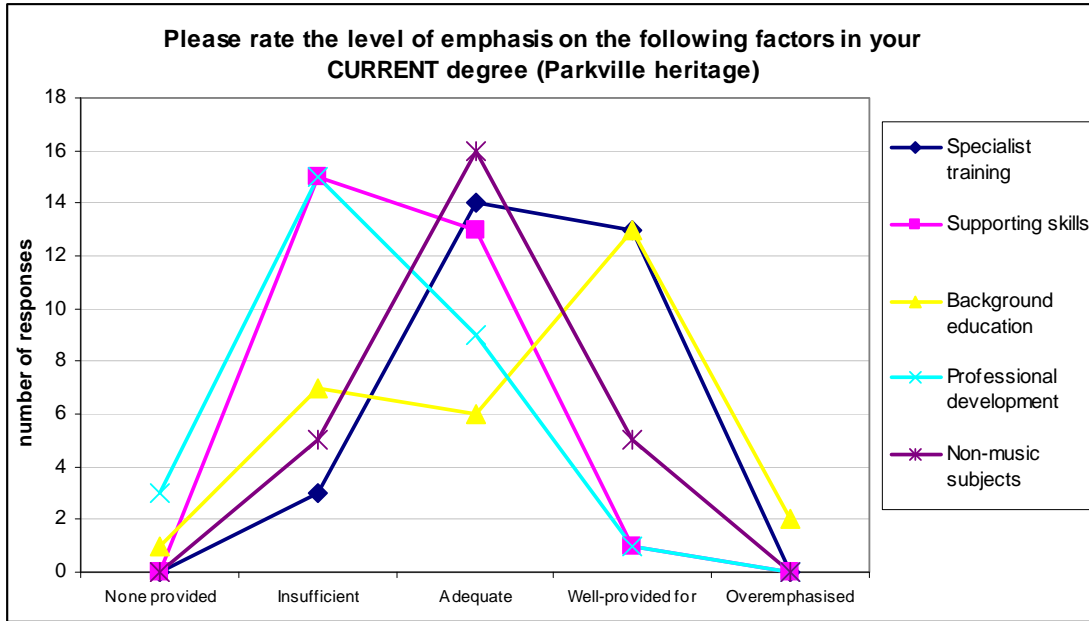


Figure 6: Parkville heritage student opinions on their current degree

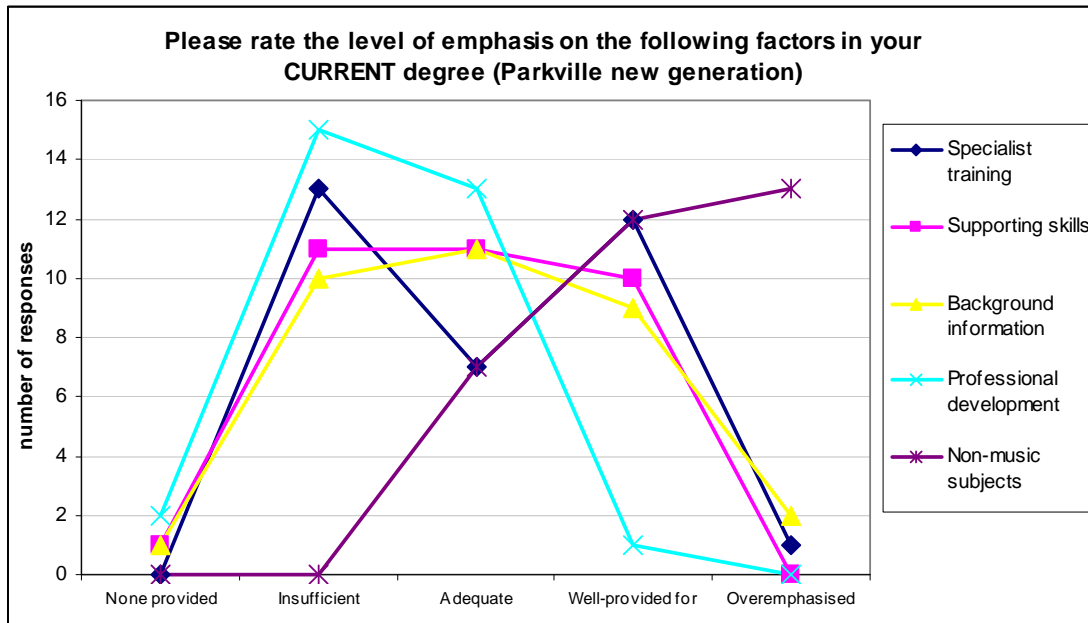
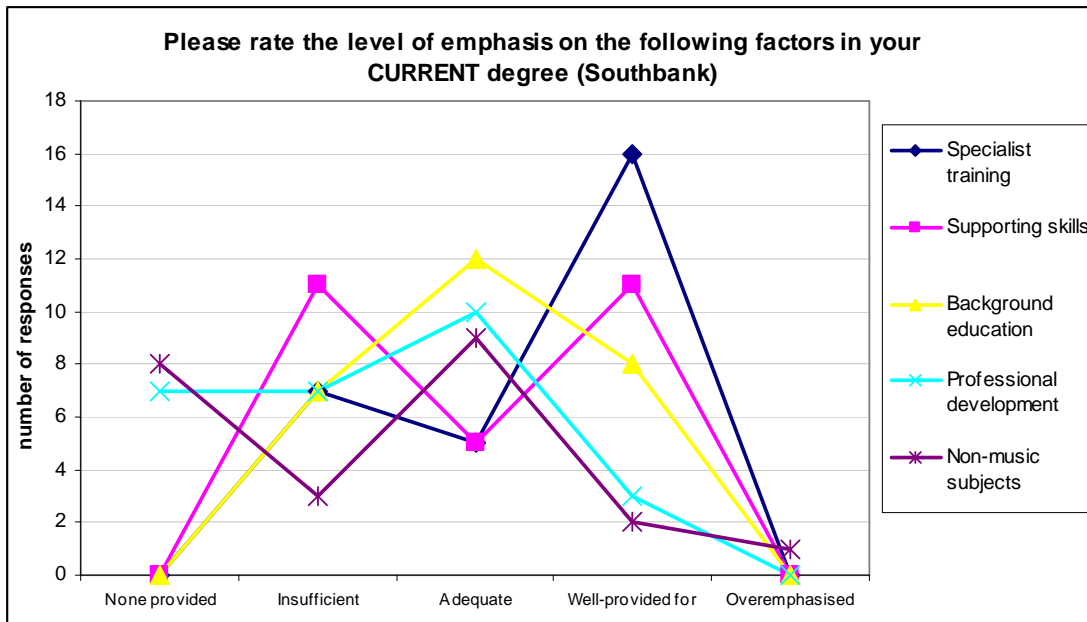


Figure 7: Parkville new generation student opinions on their current degree



**Figure 8: Southbank student opinions on their current degree**

### B. Subject choices

A lack of subject choices has been a longstanding complaint at the Parkville campus. This complaint has two components – not enough space in the degree to take electives, and not enough electives to make a genuine choice when the opportunity to take them arises.

We suspect that the high number of compulsory subjects in the new generation degree has exacerbated the first of these problems by crowding out a number of more advanced electives. New generation Parkville students noted that they did not have space to take electives they were interested in, and furthermore noted that many core history and theory subjects were also not covered in sufficient depth due to being reduced from 3 or 4 subject sequences to 2 subject sequences. One possible solution to this problem which has been suggested to us is variable quantities of breadth - 2-8 subjects instead of exactly 6, for example.

We think that if any combining of degrees is to occur, it is incredibly important to allow both specialised and broad options. Parkville and Southbank music have the same basic structure, but they also have different emphases within that basic structure – students who are suited to one of these niches are often not suited to the other. New generation degrees are probably not suitable for students who are talented musicians but academically weaker, while VET-style practical degrees are not ideal for students who wish to be primarily musicians but have strong interests and talents in other areas. We would also like to emphasise that specialist training is important to both practical and academic specialisations, and that it is important to preserve depth in both these areas. Given that the degree is unlikely to provide the room for both a broad and extensive core and a large number of specialised subjects, we think that preserving choice will be incredibly important if the two music degrees become one.

The second of these problems is an insufficient number of electives. Heritage Parkville students noted that the number of elective choices has decreased, particularly for advanced academic electives. Many noted that they could not fill the elective space in their degrees with subjects they were interested in. We believe that this is because new generation students do not have room to take such subjects, so these subjects have lower enrolment numbers. Because each subject requires a minimum enrolment to be run, a considerable number of subjects are now no longer viable. Breadth students do not compensate for this, as they tend to take less advanced music subjects than music students, resulting in a shifting of elective choices from advanced, specialised subjects to broader and less challenging ones.

However, lack of electives is not just an issue for heritage students - many new generation students also noted that they did not have enough electives to make a genuine choice between them. One of our committee members, for example, has been unable to fill her

enrolment this semester, having finished all the electives on offer in previous semesters, and we have received many complaints over the past three years about students having to take electives they are not interested in simply because there were no other options. In semester 2 of 2009 and semester 1 of 2010, there were only three academic electives offered, one of which was a beginner survey class. For a student in the last year of an academic major who needs to find 2-3 elective subjects for that semester, this effectively cancels any semblance of choice. We also note that some of the subjects that are not offered in a given year are subjects like The Ethnography of Music, which are core subjects that are actually required for certain majors, or Music Criticism, certain diction subjects, and Music Analysis, which provide skills that are central to certain career paths. While we appreciate the economic pressures associated with running low-enrolment subjects, we believe that enrolment should not be the sole criterion in deciding whether a subject runs or not, if the result is to neglect key parts of students' education.

A great deal of disappointment with subject choices also comes from the gap between rhetoric and reality. All of the former Faculty of Music's promotional materials for new students, as well as the paper handbook, list all subjects, leaving out the fact that in any given year, only about a third of these subjects will actually be offered. Most students enrol in the Faculty believing that all of these subjects are offered every year (it takes a close reading of the online handbook to learn otherwise, and before the new handbook system in 2008, you had to read each of the subject's descriptions, write down which semester it was offered in, and add them up to arrive at the true figure), and many of them expect these subjects to be offered, think that two-thirds of their subjects have been cut when they are not offered, and then end up wishing that they had gone somewhere else. We understand that promotional materials are there to present the School in the best light, but we think that it is misleading to suggest to prospective first-years that VCAM (which uses similar promotional materials to the Faculty) offers three times as many music subjects as it actually does.

### *C. Conclusions*

We would therefore recommend that any curriculum decisions should be made with the following in mind:

- more subjects which teach supporting skills, such as acting for singers or ensembles, should be offered than are currently available in the Parkville degree
- professional development opportunities should be expanded
- in order to ensure subject choices are available, the class size required for a subject to remain viable in music should be considerably lower than for the university generally, due to the lower overall enrolment and the very small number of music subjects offered.
- greater flexibility in compulsory subjects, including core music subjects and breadth, than is presently possible in the New Generation degree is needed to accommodate the differing traditions and emphases of both campuses.
- The preservation of choice, whether that choice is to be strictly specialised or very broad, practical or academic, is key to any successful curriculum.

## **3. Structure**

### *A. Merger - all VCAM disciplines*

We strongly feel that the former Faculty of Music has nothing to gain from merging with non-music arts disciplines. We remain unconvinced by 'synergy' arguments based on the benefit of having multiple arts under one roof, which ignore that formal administrative affiliations are not required for such collaboration to occur. Additionally, because of the financial differences between the VCA, particularly its non-music disciplines, and the Faculty of Music, and because budgets are generally administered at Faculty (across all arts) rather than School (the two music schools only) level, a merger will most likely cause dramatic funding losses to Music. The benefits of collaboration may be sizeable, but they are not proportionate to the drawbacks caused by losses in funding.

We also think that artistic disciplines other than music at the VCA have nothing to gain pedagogically from merging with the University. There is no longer a formal program in Creative Arts at the University of Melbourne. Opportunities for practical art outside of music at the University are generally limited to extracurricular activities which were open to students at the VCA to begin with, so that students in non-music disciplines would not be gaining any

additional opportunities. At the same time, spreading the main decision making body across all arts rather than based within each discipline is generally likely to result in a loss of autonomy for each discipline. This comes with a number of drawbacks, including an administration more distant from the concerns of students and educational decisions that are insensitive to the needs of each discipline. We imagine that if funding from breadth and from Faculty of Music endowments were the only reason for the VCA as a whole to merge with the Faculty of Music, an independent source of funding would be a far better outcome for all involved.

### *B. Merger - music schools*

We do, however, see possible benefits in a music school only merger. A school with more students and more resources means that more electives can be kept viable, especially advanced subjects and ensembles, which are often cancelled due to lack of numbers, and the different focuses of the two schools could result in a wider range of subjects and teachers for students to choose from if the combining of the two schools is done well.

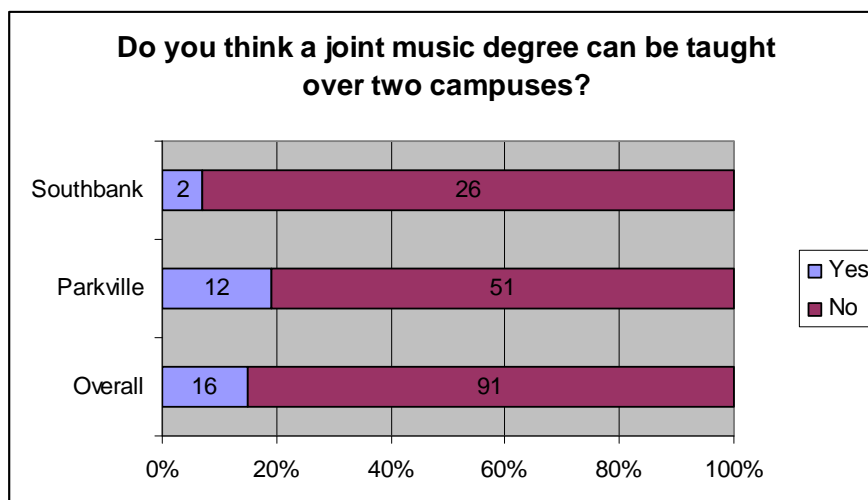
Nonetheless, there are still huge problems with the idea of a merged music school. One of the concerns shared by nearly every student whom we have talked to is the problem of travel time between campuses. As one respondent put it:

"Maybe there's a timetabling system that will work, but to be honest, I don't think the public transport system in Melbourne is up to the task of carting students between campuses en masse."

The problems we have with a two-campus school are as follows:

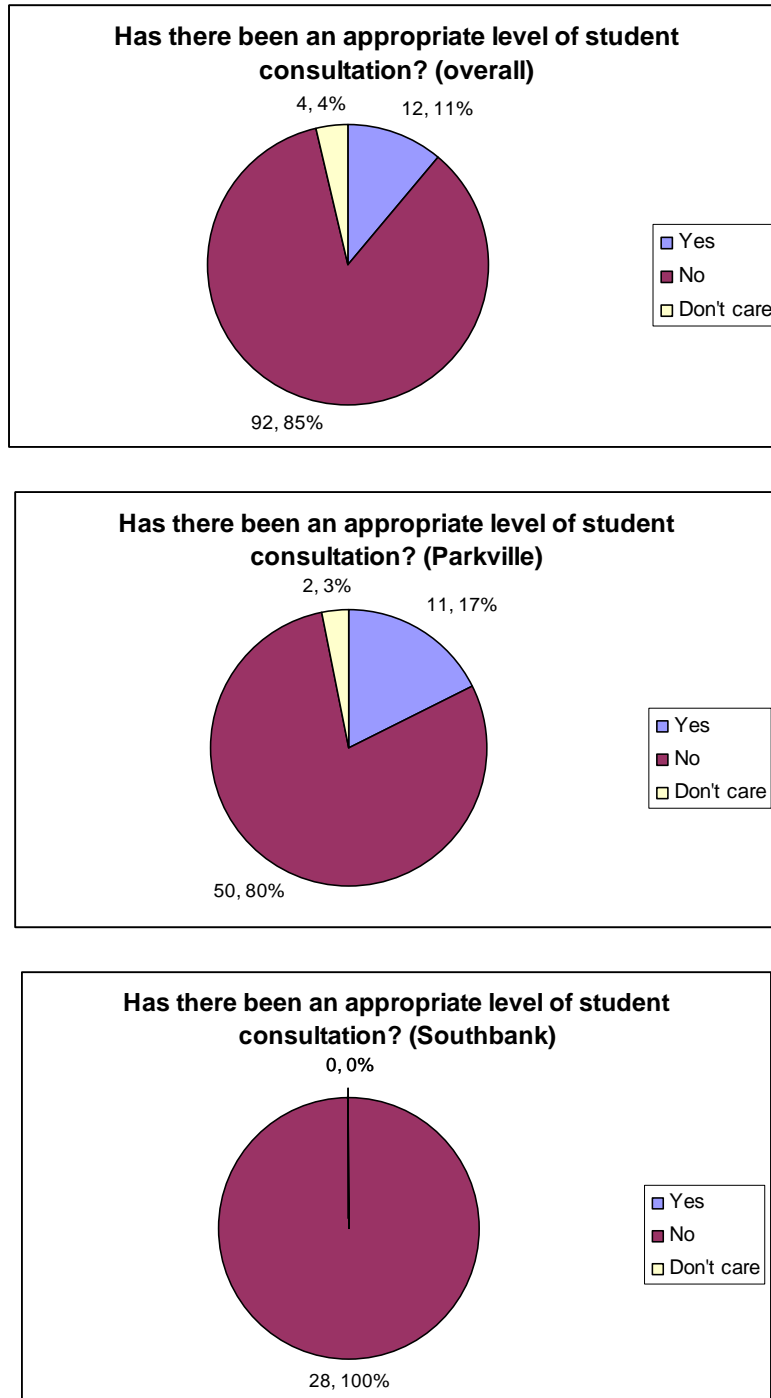
- Travelling between campuses is expensive (especially for international students who are not eligible for concession)
- Travelling between campuses is time-consuming (40 minutes from one campus to the other) and will result in a loss of practice time.
- Travelling between campuses requires a great deal of physical effort for players of large instruments
- Problems getting to and from classes will still be an issue even with a single music building, due to breadth students and teach-out of double degree students
- The public transport system between the two campuses may not be adequate for getting students to classes on time
- Because the structure of most music degrees means that at certain points in time (e.g. right before compulsory theory classes) most of the students will be at one campus, not spread across both, pressures on practice space will increase.

For these reasons, most students do not have confidence that a degree can be taught over two campuses. We would therefore recommend that if any merger of the music school happens, the combined entity should eventually be housed in a single building, although even then there will be significant problems if the new degree contains a breadth component that requires time at the Parkville campus. In the meantime, classes should be arranged so that a minimum of travel time is required, either by separating classes in the two degrees, or by timetabling subjects so that a minimum of movement is required during the day.



**Figure 9: Student opinions on the feasibility of a two-campus music school**

Another major problem with the way in which the merger has been implemented so far is the lack of communication with students over the effects of the merger and the reduction of support services at the point in the transition where they are most needed. 85% of our survey respondents felt that there had been insufficient consultation with students over the effects of the merger.



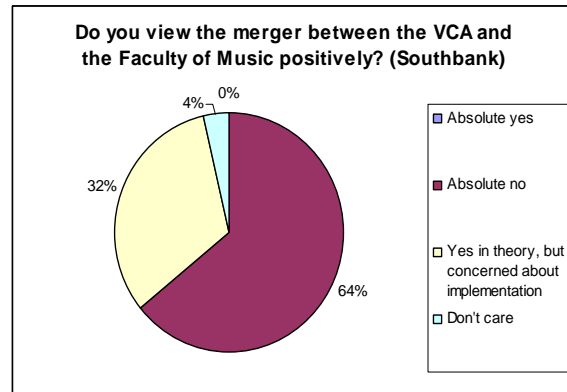
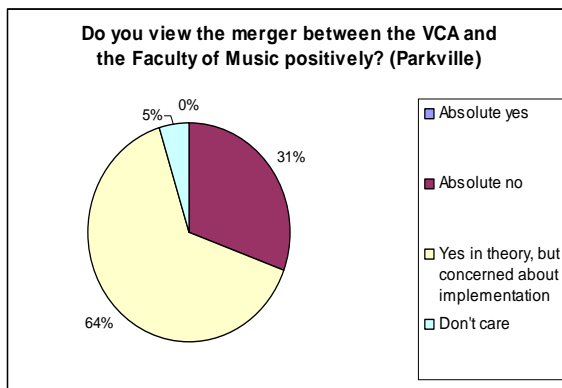
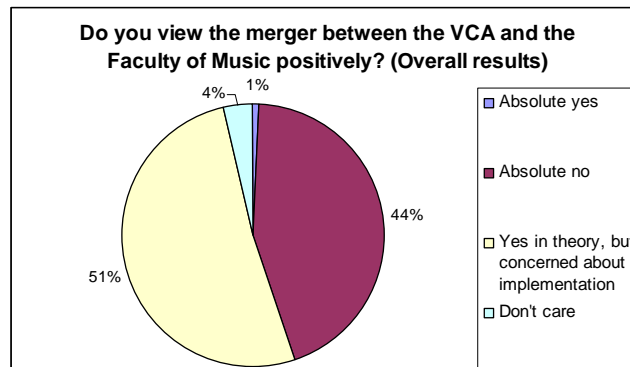
**Figure 10: Student opinions on consultation levels by campus**

In particular, the reduction of administrative support at Parkville which has occurred so far is unacceptable, particularly as it was not accompanied with any explanation as to what functions the front office, student centre, and various administrative staff now served, and who students should consult for various queries. A significant amount of students being passed around to different people has occurred, which, compounded with reductions in access to many key staff members, has made it extremely difficult to obtain course advice. We have had a number of first-years, particularly breadth students, approach us with course advice

queries because they have not been able to reach the person who actually administers their course. While the VCAM student centre at Southbank now serves both campuses, this is not at all a satisfactory solution for a two-campus School of Music, especially as a number of functions served by the former front office, such as obtaining keys to rooms, picking up exam feedback, and meeting with course advisors, are best done in person.

Additionally, the timeframe in which changes have occurred has not allowed for a sufficient transition period – often decisions (such as the closure of Parkville administrative support, or the restructuring of staff roles) were made and implemented before informing students of the changes, resulting in great confusion. For example, the Improvisation course timetable was still unavailable less than a week before classes commenced – new first years arriving for orientation were anxious about where they needed to go. The lack of planning time given to something so basic does not give us confidence about how well implementation will proceed. We feel that if a merger goes ahead, a slower transition with well thought-out stages is required.

These concerns are reflected in student opinions of a merged music school. Approximately half of our respondents viewed the merger unfavourably, with the other half supporting it in theory but having concerns over its implementation. Southbank students were more likely to be absolutely opposed to any form of merger, while Parkville students were more concerned that it would not be implemented well.



### C. Implementation

All of the structural options outlined in the Discussion Paper will require significant transition planning. We have already outlined the dangers in merger implementation. However, demerging would also require careful planning. We think that if a demerger occurs, that the University should think very carefully about the following questions:

- The 2010 music cohort, except for the Improvisation stream of the BMusPerf, is exclusively enrolled in the New Generation BMus – how will these students be divided in the event of a demerger?
- Given the large amount of staff restructuring that has occurred, how will the university reallocate staff, and how will they ensure that both campuses are adequately staffed?
- How will changes, which will be stacked on top of a number of already existing changes, be communicated to students?

We have decided to treat the two non-merged options – keeping the VCA as a separate faculty affiliated with the university, and total independence – as broadly similar in effect, although with different considerations as to funding. In the absence of detailed financial data, we do not feel we can make an informed distinction between them. We do, however, feel that a totally independent VCA is better for Parkville music than two separate Faculties due to the resources it frees for improvements that are direly needed, although we cannot say which option is better for Southbank music without significantly more information.

#### *D. Conclusions*

Our conclusions as to Faculty structure are as follows:

- We believe that the University should make additional efforts to secure an independent source of funding for all VCA disciplines, including VCA Music.
- If such funding cannot be obtained, we are open to a merged music school, but only if our concerns over its implementation are addressed.
- A successful merged music school requires:
  - o a single music building to be eventually constructed
  - o considerably greater communication with students over what the changes will mean for them than is occurring. at present.
  - o considerably more transition planning, especially teach-out planning, than is occurring at present, including a slower pace of transition.
  - o the maintenance of administrative support and advising at both campuses in the meantime, given the greater need for it during transition periods.
- We believe that merging with other arts disciplines will have a detrimental effect on the quality of education provided by Music, except in the following two instances:
  - o where each school is treated as an autonomous entity with control over its own budget, administration and curriculum
  - o where there is enough funding for all arts disciplines so that there is no need to gut one discipline to fund another.
- As neither of these conditions is or will be the case, we do not support a merger with other arts disciplines.
- We do not express a preference as to whether other arts disciplines become independent or remain a Faculty in the event of a music merger.

### **3. Other concerns**

#### *A. Consultation and teach out*

"I and others are certainly open to a change and see how it could be quite advantageous (e.g. we're gaining some awesome staff in brass), but when the heads are sitting there in Dec 09 telling us they won't have developed this year's curriculum or sorted out staff until Jan/Feb, it's a little hard to be confident in the implementation process."

-- Southbank student

"I don't feel there has been enough information about the proposed changes to the course before it happen, whilst it was going on and now that it has changed, more information about what we should expect."

-- Parkville student

By far our biggest problem with the merger process is that consultation has generally been too little and too late. Most of the students we surveyed agreed (see figure 9). Communication over what the changes would mean for students has been very ad hoc, and often also inconsistent with earlier statements, or varying according to their source. We have heard many students say that the first time they learned of a change was when they read about it in the newspaper.

We think that the student open forums were a positive step toward mitigating some of these problems, but further opportunities for students to ask questions are still needed. Southbank students thought that their consultation was held too close to exams to be convenient for most students. In addition, many students at both campuses noted that they would have liked clearer and franker answers. Having seen some of the behind-the-scenes planning as well as listened to the answers given at the forums, we feel that the answers given were honest and fairly forthcoming. However, we do think that the lack of information to student reflects the fact that the speed of the transition has been too fast – students have been asked to adapt to changes before information about these changes was made available. Obviously, we are in

favour of expanding student forums so that students can be made aware of and consulted on changes on a regular basis. But we are also in favour of significantly slowing the transition process so that there are fewer problems that make these student forums necessary.

We are particularly alarmed that changes are being undertaken in a 'business as usual' manner even while the review is taking place. For example, the combined 2010 music cohort, the loss of Parkville student admin support, and the movement of staff into different positions have all occurred despite the fact that this review is still taking place. Because this makes it considerably more difficult to implement recommendations coming out of the review, we have serious misgivings over whether the University truly intends to consider the views presented in submissions.

As far as increasing student consultation is concerned, we believe direct communication with students is preferable to representative-based communication. While we do the best we can to relay student concerns, it is always better for students to hear things firsthand. We also think it would be beneficial to have a source for information that students can look up, rather than trying to remember the answer to a question they have asked in person some time ago which may now be out of date. We are not thinking of things such as the 'fact sheet' already on the VCAM webpage, but rather something that can be used for course planning purposes, such as a list of key dates for stages in a merger/demerger process, a list of which subjects from the new degree can count toward the old, or final dates of offering for teach-out subjects.

#### *B. International students*

We believe that purposefully setting out to attract international students puts the cart before the horse: international students study overseas because they believe the quality of education is significantly better than what is on offer at home. For most artistic disciplines, students evaluate the quality of education through informal means, such as teacher recommendations, word-of-mouth or reputation, or by looking at the success of graduates. This means that the first priority by far should be on providing a high-quality education that produces internationally successful graduates, and not on international marketing campaigns and the like. Unlike in non-artistic disciplines, there is very little that can be learned about the actual quality of a music course by talking to a representative or reading a brochure, due to the very personal nature of music education. Given the amount of time, money, and effort that it takes to study overseas, such marketing will not do very much to convince the most talented overseas students, who are generally fairly savvy about which schools and teachers produce the graduates who win major competitions or orchestral seats, to come to Melbourne. We strongly believe that successful graduates are not only the best form of advertising, but the only form of advertising that really provides any return on investment in the long-term.

#### *C. Conclusions*

We would recommend:

- Establishing further, regular open forums where students are able to ask questions and to receive information, held at a convenient time
- Establishing an easily accessible and regularly updated webpage or handbook that can serve as a conclusive guide for students to plan their courses with.
- Restoring experienced student administrative staff to Parkville, even if only at peak periods.
- Making the provision of quality education the primary strategy for promoting the School of Music, or whatever it may become in future, worldwide

## **4. Conclusions**

Overall, we believe that this merger has the potential to be either a positive development or a disaster. The way that it has been implemented so far suggests that we may be on course for the latter. We recognise that this evaluation is overwhelmingly negative. However, our purpose in saying this is not to complain, but to help – to help students voice the concerns they have had over the past two years, and to help the University make decisions that are in the best interests of students. We sincerely hope that our purpose has been achieved in this report.

For more information, we can be contacted at [mss.unimelb@gmail.com](mailto:mss.unimelb@gmail.com).

## 5. Appendix – Survey results

### 1) I am:

- A) A current music student at Parkville (heritage degree) – 30 responses
- B) A current music student at Parkville (new generation) – 32 responses
- C) A current music student at Southbank – 28 responses
- D) A former music student at either school – 10 responses
- E) Other – 7 responses

### 2) What degree are you/did you study? (results not shown, question used to verify #1)

### 3) Please rate the level of emphasis on each of the following factors that a music degree SHOULD have

#### Overall

	No emphasis	Weak emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Strong emphasis	Extremely strong emphasis
Specialist training	0	1	4	21	82
Supporting skills	0	3	12	34	58
Background education	0	5	29	55	19
Professional development	4	5	34	41	24
Opportunities to take non-music subjects	11	42	37	10	7

#### Parkville (both degrees)

	No emphasis	Weak emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Strong emphasis	Extremely strong emphasis
Specialist training	0	1	3	15	45
Supporting skills	0	3	9	22	30
Background education	0	4	12	37	11
Professional development	3	2	20	23	16
Opportunities to take non-music subjects	5	22	25	6	5

#### Parkville (heritage)

	No emphasis	Weak emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Strong emphasis	Extremely strong emphasis
Specialist training	0	1	1	11	18
Supporting skills	0	2	4	10	15
Background education	0	2	6	19	4
Professional development	2	0	13	7	9
Opportunities to take non-music subjects	1	11	13	3	2

#### Parkville (new gen)

	No emphasis	Weak emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Strong emphasis	Extremely strong emphasis
Specialist training	0	0	2	4	27
Supporting skills	0	1	5	12	15
Background education	0	2	6	18	7
Professional development	1	2	7	16	7

Opportunities to take non-music subjects	4	11	12	3	3
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**Southbank**

	No emphasis	Weak emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Strong emphasis	Extremely strong emphasis
Specialist training	0	0	1	3	24
Supporting skills	0	0	2	8	18
Background education	0	1	12	11	4
Professional development	0	2	11	10	5
Opportunities to take non-music subjects	4	13	7	3	1

**4) Please rate the level of emphasis on the following factors in your current degree**

Overall

	None provided	Insufficient	Adequate	Well-provided for	Overemphasised
Specialist training	0	25	30	46	2
Supporting skills	1	42	35	23	0
Background education	2	25	33	36	5
Professional development	14	40	37	6	0
Opportunities to take non-music subjects	11	11	34	21	16

**Parkville overall**

	None provided	Insufficient	Adequate	Well-provided for	Overemphasised
Specialist training	0	16	21	25	1
Supporting skills	1	26	24	11	0
Background education	2	17	17	22	4
Professional development	5	30	22	2	0
Opportunities to take non-music subjects	0	5	23	17	13

**Parkville heritage**

	None provided	Insufficient	Adequate	Well-provided for	Overemphasised
Specialist training	0	3	14	13	0
Supporting skills	0	15	13	1	0
Background education	1	7	6	13	2
Professional development	3	15	9	1	0
Opportunities to take non-music subjects	0	5	16	5	0

**Parkville new gen**

	None provided	Insufficient	Adequate	Well-provided for	Overemphasised
Specialist training	0	13	7	12	1
Supporting skills	1	11	11	10	0
Background education	1	10	11	9	2
Professional development	2	15	13	1	0

Opportunities to take non-music subjects	0	0	7	12	13
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**Southbank**

	None provided	Insufficient	Adequate	Well-provided for	Overemphasised
Specialist training	0	7	5	16	0
Supporting skills	0	11	5	11	0
Background education	0	7	12	8	0
Professional development	7	7	10	3	0
Opportunities to take non-music subjects	8	3	9	2	1

NB: questions 3 and 4 also had space for qualitative comments that we were unable to download from the survey software due to technical problems. We can arrange for these to be viewed on request.

**5. Further comments on curriculum:****Complete list of all responses given to this question**

- The previous two-institution structure allowed choice for students between a more practical emphasis and an academic one, so it is important that this is preserved despite the merging of faculties.

- Performance students WANT more performance opportunities, its why we're studying "performance." Therefore the emphasis should be on opportunities to perform, like stage experience in opera, more recitals and masterclasses.

I also support the opportunity to study non-music subjects however and think its great to extend our knowledge beyond music studies.

- None of these questions relate to musicology which should be, but is not currently a valued part of music education. Students should be encouraged to spend time learning about music history and analysis so that they can more truly understand the music by which they are surrounded.

- With the advent of breadth subjects, it is more important than ever that music subjects are given high priority as there is less time in the degree to gain the same amount of knowledge.

- As a composition student, I'm well-provided with theory and related musical skills yet the curriculum is missing the option of further instrumental training for composers (eg piano, guitar etc)

- For Improv,

Ensemble, ensemble, ensemble. Keep the groups small. Max 6 in a group, preferably 5. Without this, the course will be of little use.

- Currently the 'general and background education' subjects (e.g. Music Language and Medieval to Early Modern Music) are very rushed. The amount of material covered needs to be lessened, as we don't want them to take up more time due to our priorities with our 'specialist training' (e.g. private lessons and practising).

- Should try to incorporate modern music (industry etc.) subjects

- I'm taking two music performance subjects as breadth this year. I have no formal musical background.

- Having heard about some of the changes that are already coming into place this year, I feel that only a very small number are actually positive for me personally. I prefer to steer away from the heavily theoretical subjects and more toward the practical with theoretical information built into them. Smaller classes are also much more beneficial for performance studies, rather than expanding classes as planned this year. This will have quite a negative affect on my final year in my performance degree.

- I would like to see more opportunities to explore careers in music - especially arts industry careers. I feel

that there are less opportunities for those of us who are not specialising in areas such as performance, composition and musicology but would still like to pursue a career in the music/arts industry.

- Not enough credit points to take electives, especially if they're academic. VERY minimal support of Composition.

- more emphasis is needed to be placed on ensemble performances/classes

- I know it's hard economically but one really important aspect of the course is the amount of time we're able to perform in front of others and receive feedback from not only our teachers but our peers. In a workshop environment (as it has been) this has worked really well, but many of us are worried that we'll only get the opportunity to perform 2-5 times a semester rather than every other week in a larger workshop situation.

It would be amazing to have more than one orchestra as well. In brass there seems to be the attitude that orchestra will host the elite, and be a goal that everyone else needs to work towards, but it will be hard to gain the experience to get there if we can't access training in another orchestra without going externally. When only the best get better, what chance does anyone else have to improve? Sure that's "how it is in real life" but this is a degree (orchestral instruments stream) which is hopefully rich with opportunities such as orchestra.

- The opportunity to study in my chosen area of specialisation from the outset was what drew me to study at the former VCA, and in fact is what drew me back to the idea of tertiary music education full stop. The opportunity for students to have continuous specialist training must not be excluded from any future course(s). As a mature-age student additional years spent in 'generalist' study can seem like so much wasted time when one's specialisation is a foregone conclusion and can be a significant deterrent to taking up study.

- VCA, when it had funding, had it right.

- I would like to see more musicology subjects exploring a larger range of musical genres and histories.

- Over the course of my studies at the VCA, one of the most invaluable opportunities I was provided, was to be able to partially integrate my professional work with assessed coursework. I have heard that this sort of flexibility within the curriculum will no longer be available, and this concerns me greatly. It is imperative that students are encouraged to take outside work in this crucial nexus between student and professional.

- Every musician needs, practical training, theoretical training, aural a working knowledge of music history, and should have a wide range of ensemble and elective opportunities. Taking away options for study and performance will reduce the quality of academics, performers and composers alike.

- The above is meant to be a reflection of what I would expect from an undergraduate Bachelor degree level qualification taught at a University. (As opposed to careers-oriented institutions such as TAFEs, or specialist performance colleges such as Conservatoriums and ANAM).

- There is not a great enough variety of academic subjects to take, forcing one to take subjects that are of no interest.

- With students from the VCA and Melbourne Uni all joining to form ensembles, a greater number of ensembles should be considered to give more opportunities to the students.

- Need more performance opportunities for students (especially undergrads) in orchestras/ chamber music

- If non-music subjects are offered that is good, however, it shouldn't be compulsory. Double degrees are available for people wish to pursue this seriously. Straight music degrees should be just that, straight music.

- Too much emphasis on academic music and not enough on the practical element (improving instrumental technique, performance opportunities, workshops, etc.)

- I feel that students doing a music performance degree should have much more than a 45 minute private lesson per week. It seems ludicrous that high school students have longer instrumental lessons than tertiary music students.

- Orchestral players need more orchestral opportunities.
- The quality of Subjects is generally really great - there is just not nearly enough hours of everything. This survey doesn't include any questions about "Specialist Related Studies" which is the most beneficial and fantastic subject that I take at Uni. This MUST be included in the new course - it is impossible to play and create music without an understanding of your instrument or Vocal Anatomy. Anna Connolly's Vocal materials is a MUST for all Singers of all Styles particularly Opera and Classical singing. Feldenkrais is also the other thing that absolutely needs to be included in a music course - not just for singers. Instrumentalists would absolutely benefit as well for their playing and comfort.
- The more private lessons the better.
- Professional development is very good but only if you seek it out, which is fine because everyone does. In terms of formally organised options I would have to say it's close to insufficient.
- More regular, reliable instrument-specific workshop classes (ask a clarinettist about how often clarinet classes happen) are needed. Chamber music needs reforming, in regards to available rehearsal space and availability of tutors. My saxophone quartet was this year unable to get a saxophonist to tutor us.
- There needs to be a stronger emphasis on training us to be elite musicians of the highest calibre, ready to take on anything the professional world requires from us. More ensembles, more hours, more inspiring teachers (instead of some of the jaded, uninspired ones we have at the moment). The course should take cues from courses like WAAPA, Manhattan School of Music and The New School. There is an invaluable resource of amazing musicians and teachers around Australia who could do a better job at running the course than the current staff.
- we need more visiting professors to give masterclasses, more orchestra performance opportunities, more freedom to collaborate with other students (at the moment, only ensembles of 3 or more students are allowed, so duets are not allowed, e.g. flute and harp)
- Too much emphasis is placed on soloistic work, I would like to see more time taken to develop ensemble skills and professional development skills that musicians need to be able to get further work within the music industry after their course.
- Too much emphasis on making us 'well rounded, worldly people'. We want to be professional musicians. Generalists in music won't succeed, thus we need an emphasis on intense, specialist, practical training.
- In my opinion, practical study should not be a compulsory part of 3rd and 4th year bachelor of music, but should be an option for those who want to be performers and those who want to be better musicians. also, double degree students such as myself should have the option of continuing on to 4th year practical study. compulsory subjects such as music techniques subjects are irrelevant to a lot of students and could be replaced with a list of other subjects students could choose from.
- I don't feel like I get enough lesson time with my instrumental teacher, nor does my teacher feel like he gets enough lesson time to teach me - many teachers go significantly over the lesson time they are paid for in order to ensure their students get enough time with them, because the reality is that not very much teaching can be done in 45 minutes. Others stack lessons in fortnightly 90 minute lessons. Almost all the teachers I've talked to find 45 minutes unsatisfactory.
- There are a lot of very interesting academic and applied skills electives that 'are not available'.
- I just finished my exchange at the Chicago College of Performing Arts. In terms of performance opportunities (for piano at least), Melbourne University is significantly better. My perspective of how the Melb Uni program operates having had an experience at another leading Music school has definitely changed. While before I thought that all music schools operated in a similar fashion, I have realised that at Melb Uni we often take things like Concert Class, Performance Class etc for granted.
- As a piano student, I have found performance opportunities and ESPECIALLY the opportunity for ensemble training insufficient.
- From the point of view of a fairly average, middle-of-the-road student who took the old degree, and who has friends in the new degree, it is important to stress that both were quite flawed. I could write extensively on these flaws. I imagine the Music program at the VCA has its flaws too, although purely anecdotally I

hear far fewer VCA students complaining about their course. The important thing for the new program/s that will emerge from this review is to provide something useful and relevant to young trainee music professionals of all types: performers of every level from Vienna Phil to wedding band, school teachers and private teachers, music therapists, musicologists and ethnomusicologists, composers, conductors, administrators and a whole range of others. This review should aim to provide a curriculum for tertiary music education which stands among the best in the world on its own terms, by endeavouring to engender a rigorous, thorough, thought-provoking and most importantly joyous musical experience for ALL the varieties of student that walk through the front doors. It is vital to avoid a "compromise program" based not on any particular pedagogical or musical principles, but rather on power play between two very different institutions. A politically-constructed hodge-podge of the two programs serves no-one, and particularly not the student body, who will after all become the musicians of tomorrow.

- The vocal department NEEDS to bring in classes of vocal physiology, vocal health and body awareness to be anywhere near adequate. The current system that is in place is quite good, but THIS IS A GAPING HOLE IN OUR EDUCATION AND LEAVES US UNDERPREPARED FOR LIFE AS A SINGER.

The ensemble classes are EXCELLENT and more should be made of them - e.g. more classes, more often.

- Love the fact that I can take Breadth study subjects from outside of my degree but timetabling isn't sufficiently well thought out to cope with this often meaning that nearly everything from another faculty clashes badly.

- It's very confusing for students who want to take non-music subjects on how to go about it or if its possible. However, on the other hand it seems like a non-music subject is forced upon you (especially in 4th year) and for people wanting to focus on music, there isn't enough choice and variety within music subjects.

- While the techers and lecturers are generally of a good standard, we are not given enough contact time with them and they are required to teach a huge amount of material in a relatively short time frame. Maybe there should be streamed theory classes as well as solfege, allowing those students who already have a high level to avoid doing large assignments on things they already know.

- Specialist training needs more funding, either for longer lessons, or more masterclasses. Academic subjects should be more interesting and specialised. It is impossible to learn anything worthwhile when you cover 400 years of music history in 12 weeks.

- Breadth interferes with the BMus quite a lot; and often the breadth is more work than several music subjects combined.

## 6) Do you view the merger between the VCA and the Faculty of Music positively?

	Overall	Parkville	Southbank
Absolute yes	1	0	0
Absolute no	47	19	18
Yes in theory, but concerned about implementation	55	40	9
Don't care	4	3	1

## 7) Do you think that a joint music degree can be taught effectively over two campuses?

	Overall	Parkville	Southbank
Yes	16	12	2
No	91	51	26

## 8. Further comments on Faculty structure

### Complete list of all responses given to this question

- A degree that requires students to sit on trams for large amounts of their day will inevitably lead to underpracticed students, ultimately resulting in declining student numbers due to a damaged reputation of the faculty and a devaluing of its degree(s). That said, there are many positives that could come out of this merger IF and only if it is managed well. Eventually students will need to be located at one campus only, but some inter-campus activity will have to be tolerated in the near future as everything is sorted out.

- the VCA is unique as is Parkville and students audition there for a reason, they should be kept unique and not tried to be made the same institution. As a result many wonderful performing degrees at VCA have been made academic completely defeating their original purpose. What about the future of performing arts in Vic?? You cant learn everything from a textbook.

- Having compulsory classes (in my case string class) taught at Southbank while all of my other classes are at Parkville makes it very difficult to schedule my other subjects- the double degree students haven't been accounted for, having to work around arts subjects as well as a music timetable split over two campuses is a huge hassle. I'm sure this is affecting many other students similarly. I suggest keeping the instrumental classes split.

- The current specialisations at each faculty are extremely unique, such as the Improvisation course at the VCA and Musicology at Melbourne, and as far as possible, these avenues should be kept open- as a postgraduate option at the very least. There was a distinct difference between the way Melbourne and VCA ran their music courses, and it would great if such flexibility were available to future music students.

- People choose to study at the VCA because it is a practical degree. We don't have to worry about academic pursuits so we can really focus on our instruments.

- I believe single campuses will always be more effective and inclusive (and practical)

- I'm very concerned about the travel time between the two campuses when the Parkville campus has everything a music school needs. I feel that classes at the Southbank campus are unnecessary and cause us to lose time that could be spent practising.

- I don't think management should be listening to the needs of staff more. They shouldn't be downsizing and cost cutting too much.

- Theoretically this could have been a fantastic opportunity to enrich both courses at each institution. Instead, because of the University's focus on the bottom line rather than first class education (in this case, yes, these are mutually exclusive, and Melbourne Uni has very much become a profit-based business), a rushed, unbalanced and unequal course is currently forming.

- Travel time between campuses can never be taken into account in a timetable due to breadth. It is highly inconvenient and wastes valuable study and rehearsal time.

- It's a joke. No one knows what's going on. Not even the staff know what's going on. It's a mess. I don't want to have to travel to VCA for classes. I enrolled to go to Melbourne Uni and that's the campus where I want to spend my time.

- The merger is a cost cutting measure aimed at revenue raising with little-no concern for the subsequent ruin of the faculty: facilities, reputation and staff morale. This would not have happened to the departments of medicine, engineering or other faculties with more 'practical', material and therefore marketable aims.

- It's a terrible shame that what were two unique institutions will most probably be be compromised in the search for a middle ground. Speaking as a musician the Con and VCA Music were equally valid and valuable entities in very different ways, and I lament what appears will be a great loss of diversity. I was leaving Secondary school when Latrobe Music vanished and I remember the hole that was left then; I hate to think what the landscape of music education in Melbourne will look like if this goes badly. As for the rest of the VCA (Art, Dance, Drama, Film, Production), from my experience the existing culture and structure seem to me utterly incompatible with the Con and I really don't understand why anyone thought it a good idea for them to come under the same umbrella. We may as well try to bring in

Engineering or Microbiology as well.

- I would not like to have to study subjects which are only provided on another campus. I am also concerned with the already inadequate space for practise. Often students have to wait an hour to gain access to practise facilities. My concern is that with the merger there will be even more demand.

- I think that having the option for two differently structured music degrees is important for Melbourne, and that respect for the heritage of both is important. A complete merger would mean that this would be quite lost for at least one of the degrees. I can't quite see the best of both worlds in a single degree when breadth subjects have to be fitted in as well.

- I think that having the option for two differently structured music degrees is important for Melbourne, and that respect for the heritage of both is important. A complete merger would mean that this would be quite lost for at least one of the degrees. I can't quite see the best of both worlds in a single degree when breadth subjects have to be fitted in as well.

- I am concerned about the new staff-to-student ratio, as well as the potential loss of the friendly and individual-oriented culture between students and staff at the VCA.

- Spreading the classes between two campuses could work in theory, however the half an hour travel time between the two campuses will cause timetabling issues, particularly given that music subjects do not appear on Alloc8. Scheduling breadth subjects will also be made rather difficult.

- If they have any sense they will divide up content between the campuses in such a way that the majority of students will spend the majority of their time at one campus or the other.

- It can be taught over 2 campuses, but this needs to be phased in, not introduced this year. Double degree students will suffer the most for it.

- I believe the model of the BMus across both campuses and in addition more technical, shorter diplomas etc. at Southbank, giving students the choice of what kind of degree they wish to pursue.

- If students have to move between the two campuses then travel time must be considered when deciding where subjects will be taught. Especially for those students who have a breadth subject traveling around the city would definitely be a waste of time.

- To get the most out of the degree, there needs to be specialist teachers on both campuses AT ALL TIMES

- I like the greater community aspect - more interaction between students of two campuses, access to teachers etc.

Dislike the lack of choice in degrees - only the comparatively academic course, no option for those who are wanting purely playing degrees.

Also dislike idea of breadth requirement

- I applied to Parkville because that was where I wanted to do my degree - I don't want to have to split my time over two campuses'

- This merger is not required and it is simply going to be far too messy. Therefore, I predict that because it will be too tricky, Melbourne Uni will just take on the whole course over time and VCA will become obsolete which is a great shame. There are enough music/academic courses in Victoria, VCA was the only practise-based institutions moulding musicians into specialists of their craft.

- Deeply concerned about the loss of a head of department. I can in no way see how one "convener" can have overview of two campuses and give each student the individual support and attention.

- It's ridiculous to even consider teaching over two campuses. People have better things to do than sit on public transport all day. Like practice.

- In terms of splitting the degree across two campuses, it seems that too much time will be wasted traveling back and forth between campuses which could otherwise be spent practising or studying.

- Travelling between the 2 campuses will be a nightmare if expected.

- The merger has lots of potential but Unimelb have a history of screwing things up. Traveling between

campuses (except for ensemble/lessons) is silly and shouldn't happen

- I don't know about the two campus thing

- Unless the courses are essentially the same and everyone is on an equal playing field, I think it is unfair to expect the students to join together for subjects, especially if they're practical subjects. To have one campus with a huge emphasis on practical subjects and practicing, and to then expect students from the other campus to comfortably perform in front of students that have a lot more training is unfair.

Join the two schools together, by all means, but it should not affect the students who signed up prior to the merger, for one school and not the other.

Furthermore, now that we are merged and the admin teams have essentially been reduced to one, why can students from the Faculty of Music not do subjects from the VCA? And vice versa? If you are merging them, then merge them. Don't merge them simply as is convenient for you.

- I am concerned about the merging between the two schools. I don't want to see the already existing courses at both faculties disrupted. I would like to see the current courses (before the merger) all continue and as little disruption to the current music degrees as possible in reference to venue, timetable and tute/lecture sizes changing.

- I think both faculties will benefit in **SOME** ways from this merger, but I think that overall, it will be destructive, especially for VCA students. Parkville students will benefit from the **HIGHER LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE** that the VCA students will bring to the degree, but VCA students will not benefit from the increased academic requirements of the course.

- Maybe there's a timetabling system that will work, but to be honest, I don't think the public transport system in Melbourne is up to the task of carting students between campuses en masse. I would also like to point out that for international students, going between campuses gets very expensive due to the lack of concession cards.

- Having two campuses is not good - it creates sub-cultures between the two. The result is that students mainly based at an 'off-campus' (cf. the main Parkville campus) do not get to experience the full services at Melbourne University. However, if students keep spending their time travelling between the two campuses: a) they do not experience a sense of belonging to any one place; b) this costs money! and c) this takes time (40-60mins). This then limits what students can study, if breadth subjects are required in their course structure. It hinders students who actually want to be able to study a broad range of subjects.

- I would be extremely wary of trying to teach one holistic program over two different campuses...it seems like it would have the potential to unduly divide resources, separate Music students from the rhythms of student life on either campus, and at a very practical level, waste a lot of time on going backwards and forwards on trams. These things said, the reality is that Southbank is much better equipped than Parkville: from the run-down Conservatorium building, the shabby basement annex and Berkeley St buildings and the absolutely dreadful Royal Parade terrace houses - Southbank certainly needs work, but has much great potential for improvement and expansion than the heritage-listed Con. I think in the end the best solution is probably to move all practical music making to Southbank, and focus the limited Parkville resources on the things which are most productively located there: Musicology/Ethnomusicology for interaction possibilities with other Schools (Anthropology, History, Materials Conservation, etc) and perhaps Music Therapy for similar interaction with Psychology/Medicine and the hospital precinct. There may be scope, as it grows, to locate all of the Faculty's growing graduate programs at Parkville.

- Not yet sure what that is going to be... I hope that it can be made to work, but nothing I have seen or heard so far leads me to believe that there is going to be harmony in the music faculty.

- Having to change between campuses for different lessons seems like a big problem. From 3 years of experience, changing campuses within one day (or even with the week) is tiring and very time consuming. It seems like an impossible task to schedule classes on a day in which you need to change campus, especially if we are expected to take non-music subjects.

- It concerned me when the merger was first initiated that for orchestra the Parkville and Southbank students clearly had different rules about attendance. At Parkville, especially in the woodwind section, we know that we must turn up on time with the music learned and that there will be severe consequence if we don't. The Southbank students were continuously late and it was difficult to perform to our highest with this

difference of expectations.

- I think that a joint degree could be taught well over two campuses if timetabling was carefully considered. I think that if the current breadth of subjects were offered, students could structure a degree suitable to their own needs. I worry, however, that if there is only one degree with many core subjects, as there are in the current degrees, some students won't be able to study what is most useful for them. Not all musicians learn the same way, have the same ambitions, are interested in the same things... If everyone has to do the same degree, I feel it will be a great loss for the next generation of musicians. Do you want to hear the same sort of musician play every night or do you want some variety?

- Each institution had its own identity and strengths and the amalgamation seems to be leading to a dumbed down, homogeneous run of the mill course.

Economics seems to be the driving force behind this with a reduction in the number of places for music students in Melbourne.

**9) Do you feel as if students have been adequately informed of the changes?**

	Overall	Parkville	Southbank
Yes	13	12	1
No	92	49	27
Don't care	3	2	0

**10) Do you feel as if there has been an appropriate level of student consultation?**

	Overall	Parkville	Southbank
Yes	12	11	0
No	92	50	28
Don't care	4	2	0

**Q11: Parkville heritage students: do you feel teach-out has been handled well?**

	Yes	3
No	I wish I had more subject options	21
	I wish I had more information	17
	Don't care	1

**12. Further comments on the implementation of the VCAM merger**

**Complete list of all responses given to this question**

- One word to the dean in particular: CAREFUL. Yes, many positives MAY come out of this merger, but it also has the potential to be an epic disaster.

- All I can comment on is the Improvisation course, and we all fear that the integrity of this course is under serious threat. Keep ensemble groups small, academic pressures minimal and maintain its practical focus.

- Why's numbers to the improvisation/music performance been cut? where's the future?

- I support the students and staff in their strike actions.

- All the electives I wanted to study (and have been waiting since first year to study) have been cut. This will have a significant affect on my career when I leave University, as it means I will now have to try and

seek this training elsewhere, after finishing the degree which should have equipped me with these skills. (Mostly I am referring to studio based opportunities and music with relation to recording and technology).

The whole process has felt very secretive and biased. Occasionally students were encouraged to send an email or attend a forum, but no strong answers were ever provided to any questions, and this always felt like it was prepared more to console students rather than to have any direct effect on the situation. Then, suddenly, decisions are made and handed down to be implemented straight away, allowing no reaction time or discussion of what is actually occurring.

- Reduction of staff at the Parkville campus and changing of their responsibilities means that music students have reduced support despite a larger intake and changing procedures. What are we meant to do... travel to Southbank to ask a simple question? In general, companies with 2 offices have reception at both places.

- merger with Melbourne University seem's geared more towards financial gains rather than improving teaching and learning conditions at the campus, with numerous staff and funding cuts while at the same time increasing the amount of students accepted each year. Melbourne University has acted non-transparently during the merger, and have kept their cards very close to their chest. Any information that has been posted on various websites and in newspapers has been elusive and long winded. These articles are generally no more than attempts at pacification or red herrings to students of the VCA opposed to the changes in my opinion are both insulting and patronising

- The change would have been much more successful if we had been better informed. Our consultation and information sessions were always placed at inaccessible times (during exams, holidays, orchestra rehearsals), and we never came away knowing much more than what we went in with, as most questions couldn't be answered, or worse, discovering cover ups and contradictions (mainly about staffing). It is better to not hear the line "there will be no changes to your course" than to know with basic logic that because of the staffing and relocations, there has to be. And I guess that's been the argument the whole way along.

I and others are certainly open to a change and see how it could be quite advantageous (e.g. we're gaining some awesome staff in brass), but when the heads are sitting there in Dec 09 telling us they won't have developed this year's curriculum or sorted out staff until Jan/Feb, it's a little hard to be confident in the implementation process. A month out and we don't even know which campuses we'll need to be at this year, let alone who is teaching us and even what our subjects entail. All our knowledge is based on staff hints and rumour. That's been quite concerning.

- It's a load of rubbish

- Student information and consultation during the initial exploratory stages of the merger was non-existent.

- [The University] should stop lying to the students and let us know what is really going on so we can make informed decisions about our futures. It is less than six weeks out from the start of the new year and my friends and I are still uncertain about what changes there will be to our courses and how they will effect us.

- I have the greatest faith that the academic & teaching staff will do their utmost to do what is in the best interest of the students. The behaviour of the recently installed senior administration leaves me deeply worried for my own education, for that of my fellow students, and for the reputations of the former VCA and of the former Faculty of Music as places of elite specialist training.

- It's foul and very unfortunate for those of us who have to complete a VCA degree without sufficient staff, funding and opportunities.

- Being well informed on the process would be much appreciated.

- Being well informed on the process would be much appreciated.

- By reducing our choices, you are reducing our chances to compete nationally and internationally. Melbourne prides itself on being an artistic and cultured city - comprising the institutes that produce these artists will lose this distinction.

- The VCAM "merger" has not actually happened yet, so find the phrasing of questions 9 and 10 a bit misleading. Hence my response.

- There seems to be no leadership on any of the major issues - it is as though no-one is willing to take responsibility for changes.
- As a student, I have heard nothing on the whole thing. I have had to seek information and I am STILL uncertain about teachers/timetabling/locations for this year which will commence shortly. For a post-grad student this is highly unacceptable as work must be organised around class times and having no notice of when classes will be scheduled has made my life difficult while I wait around for the University to make up it's mind. Hopefully, somewhere along the line, I will be informed of when and where to turn up.
- look after the southbanks students.
- Teach-out was a bit annoying, there were good subjects removed from curriculum (instrumental teaching became a masters subject, group music skills dropped entirely)
- We have not been consulted. The Forums held have been avoidance sessions. Been very bad for moral to have the Head of Music not even listening or understanding our issues. Firing Heads of department and implementing Convenors and holding a discussion session the next working day is outrageous.
- Unimelb are making it hard for themselves by making it hard on the students, who are why they exist and who they should be trying to make happy. The lack of communication is the most disappointing. I'm sure that if people knew what was happening and if they knew they had options then they'd be mostly happy.
- I understand that the University and the former VCA had financial reasons for implementing the merger in 2009 and introducing the single BMus (excluding Improv) in 2010, but I think one problem has been that students have been unaware of what the new degree, and the teach out of old degrees over two campuses are going to look like, because they're still up in the air. This has been perceived by some as the University withholding information, but I think what's going on is that the merger was in place well before the curriculum had taken shape. I'm not sure what a better alternative would be, but I think that's been one of the reasons so many have been angry.
- It should not have affected students who had already enrolled before any of this took place. The subjects and course left for those who are finishing the teach out degree is practically laughable.
- Supporters of the Melbourne Model say that the new course will prepare students for the real world. But they say this without any knowledge of the 'classical music world'. The classical music world is more competitive than ever. You only have to search the web for winners of international classical music competitions to realise that Australians are hardly ever the winners. Or the very limited number of orchestral jobs available these days. 95% of students studying classical music want to get into an orchestra or perform in a professional ensemble such as an established string quartet. If you want to succeed in any way as a classical musician you have to attend LIVE AUDITIONS. The ONLY WAY to land an orchestral job is to PERFORM for a panel of judges. You have to SHOW that you can play your instrument better than other people in the audition. At the moment, NO PANEL IN THE WORLD WILL ASK YOU TO WRITE AN ESSAY IN THE AUDITION. What counts is HOW WELL YOU PLAY, not how knowledgeable you are. Most auditions are held behind a screen, so the panel have no idea who you are. Welcome to OUR world. This is a world where those who learn to deal with performance anxiety can compete in the REAL world, and those who spend more time on improving their essay-writing skills will struggle. This is why it is so crucial to play and perform as much as possible when you are a student. The Melbourne Model puts more emphasis on written work, which is a step backwards for musicians striving for a performing career. If students wanted to become music historians or teachers they will do a course such as a Teaching Degree to achieve this. But students who choose to enrol in a Bachelor of Music Performance course at VCA obviously want a career in 'music performance'.
- I don't feel there has been enough information about the proposed changes to the course before it happen, whilst it was going on and now that it has changed, more information about what we should expect. I would not like to see the Parkville Bmus course changed drastically, and the venues for our subjects changed to split us between the Southbank and Parkville campuses. Splitting the classes between campuses will cause a lot of problems with students carry instruments between campuses, having to use public transport at an extra expense when at first they expected, and were led to believe, they would be based at one of the campuses. It doesn't seem fair to existing students to have their course drastically changed on such short notice, under such controversial circumstances, and without fair compromise to the students needs/concerns.

- They're such separate courses, with different teaching methods, different ideas and different outcomes. It would be in the best interests of all students to keep them separate. Not all students want an academically focussed music degree, and not all want a degree with such a strong emphasis on performance as the VCA degree. Thus, since they both provide something completely different, they should remain separate degrees, or at least if they should be merged, allow greater flexibility for students in that they should be able to choose whether they want their OWN degree to be focussed on performance or academics.

- Transparency is probably the biggest problem. It's hard to know where to look for information - advising staff don't always know the whole picture, and can give conflicting accounts. Law has a single webpage with updates on teachout which students can consult - is it so hard for music to do the same?

- I've always regarded the VCA as a school that is alot more performance-based than the music course at the uni, and the merger means that the top students might lose out on that extra degree of specialised training and attention they might otherwise get at the VCA.

- It feels like students have had little say in the entire merger. The students at VCA have been very vocal about what they're losing from the whole process and the students at the 'Con' have been pointed to as the 'winners'. This is not the case. The Con students are also losing from this merger - staff are being cut/leaving, our facilities cannot be upgraded (despite the nearby Commerce faculty moving much of its activities to its new building thereby freeing up a new building). The cultures of both the VCA and the Con are unique and cannot be easily meshed - it feels like this element has not been considered (although admittedly difficult to do so as it cannot be expressed on paper).

The first joint concert held in April was a clear indication of the animosity towards the merger not just by students but also by staff. The VCA has a culture where one week is given to production week - orchestra rehearsals for the whole week without other classes. However, Univeristy of Melbourne (Con) students could not afford this time as they had university classes to attend. If students are to excel, such commitments (that are university-based, such as orchestra) need to be within the framework in which they can happen.

It seems like students have not been consulted in the actual implementation of how the VCAM merger could actually be most effective - there have been open forums and discussions where students have been TOLD what is going to happen without regard to how they will be affected.

- What is teach-out?

I sincerely hope that the varying needs of students can be met in the new system, i.e. that the VCA's emphases are possible, with the enhancement of elements of the Con degree, and vice-versa. The worst outcome would be complete absorption of one into the other to create a mediocre Bmus.

- Also due to the new generation degree, but as an exchange student I am not clear about the subjects that I am required to take when I return to Melbourne.

- We need to be told about what is happening with the merger. Everyone has been left in the dark and its unacceptable.

- As a heritage double degree student, my degree has been grossly neglected in this merger. Subjects have not been taught out as promised, severely compromising my degree. The implementation has been incredibly messy, and there has not been enough information made public.

### 13. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Complete list of all responses given to this question

- take note of what ive already expressed.

- VCA should really have received more funding. While I was at secondary school the courses they offered were even more highly spoken of than those at Melbourne, and it was an honour - almost an awe-inspiring event - to be accepted into the VCA. It is sad to see such a respected institution being subsumed by another institution and forced to change its ways. It seems that change is necessary in any case, but I hope that VCA's reputation for excellence in teaching will not become tarnished. It makes me very sad that most courses at VCA seem to be untouched (although I'm not sure of this), while the Music course - unique as it is in Melbourne - gets totally revised and merged with the existing Melbourne music degree.

I hope that the eventual change sees a music degree combining the best of both original degrees, and some measure of flexibility which allows students to pursue similar pathways as they would originally have had access to, although I am not so optimistic about this possibility. I pray that those deciding on the future curriculum will prove me wrong.

- Melbourne has traded on it's positive PR for so long, it has gotten away with sub standard degrees/teaching.

- Listen to what Ashley Cross (Improv Lecturer) has to say very very carefully. He knows what it takes to keep our course valid and effective.

- Having an education to become a professional musician in Australia and overseas requires a balanced program of theoretical skills (including study of performance practice), aural skills, and performance practice skills (to the public) at a high level.

The teachers have been very supportive however more time is needed in all these areas to establish a high quality institution.

To become a musician students need to have industry training (including being business savvy - being a musician is actually like running a small business. A subject or topic in a subject on grant writing would be beneficial in which the students have to apply for different grants for an actual musical project.

More performance opportunities with professionals are needed to start a career and also to gain confidence as a musician - that type of opportunity was the best musical training I have received as an undergraduate student.

- Any changes made should be on the basis of improving the nature of the courses offered, in particular increasing the amount of chamber music and ensemble coaching available for students. I studied at the VCA as an undergraduate in the 1980's. At that time the opportunities to work with excellent staff members, all professional musicians in their own right was a notable feature of the course. Indeed I probably learnt more about being a musician from those sessions. Nowadays I understand that these opportunities have been curtailed. This I believe weakens any course which claims to be aimed at preparing musicians for a career as a performer. Lessons and lectures by themselves are completely inadequate. It is in intensive ensemble and chamber music training that a musician learns the skills necessary to make it as a performer. As a professional musician I have sat on many audition panels over the years. Too often we would have a candidate who, while able to play quite well, was unable to sight read, clearly didn't have a working knowlege of the repertoire and importantly whose ensemble skills were inadequate, a result I belive of attending a course where there weren't enough opportunities to develop those important ensemble skills vital to any performing musician.

- The almighty dollar shouldn't be the main determining factor in University management.

- I have tried very hard to stay positive about this situation, but as a result of how this teach out is being handled (as well as the experiences I had as a creative arts student being taught out at Melbourne), I cannot help but feel manipulated and helpless about the situation. The sentiment amongst the students in my year is very much one of "Thank goodness we're getting out at the end of this year". A sad sentiment, considering how hard working and studious we generally are and how much we all love what we do.

- I would like to see more information given to heritage students regarding our post-graduate options. Will the fact that the students from the last year of the heritage degree and the first year of the new generation

degree graduate at the same time mean there is far greater competition for post-grad places?

- there is nothing that the arts community of Melbourne stands to gain by a merger of Melbourne University and the VCA. The VCA needs to be returned to its former status as an independent arts school.. in layman's terms
- if it ain't broke, don't fix it!

- Thanks for listening :).

- Too much to say

- I understand that funding is an issue which has to be addressed, and the lack of funding will always lead to negative outcomes, but there is an ideological change being swept through with it which is destroying the whole reason the VCA exists in the first place - to be THE specialist arts training institution in Victoria.

- I hope the merger is not a means to more generalist subjects and a loss of subject choices. I'm interested in seeing more musicology subjects offered. Hopefully the merger will offer greater and more specialist subject choices to major in.

- bring back facilities and after hours rehearsals (including weekends) at VCA.

- Don't forget that there are still students completing double degrees that will have other subjects at Parkville.

- The University has handled all of this quite unprofessionally in my opinion and should seriously improve on this if they wish to remain a competitive university internationally. It seems as though there has been a serious neglect for students and how this merger is affecting us. This is the main problem as without the students, the university does not exist. An incredibly disappointing experience for everyone and something the University should be extremely embarrassed by.

- Some information on this year's course would be fantastic, seeing this is what we have been asking for for the last year..!

- I am glad I'll be out soon...

- I'm not sure the University as a whole understands who are the valuable teachers/pedagogues or professors at both VCA and Parkville. It is disappointing to see that the top level teachers such as Anna Connolly was not involved in the choosing of the next intake of singers for 2010. Cannot understand how

- The great potential of the merger comes from its options, so I think a focus on that will really save Unimelb a lot of headaches because students will see that it could really work. Also they should stop announcing things at the last minute when it's too late to have an opinion they'll take seriously, because that's more annoying than I can express politely.

- The administration of the music faculty needs to be improved because the quality has been continuously depreciating and the welfare of the students no longer considered important when it should be the ultimate priority of the faculty.

- This is a step backwards for the whole artistic community in Australia, and will weaken the already fragile artistic network in our country.

- I've found that, with the opening of more subjects to breadth students, many lower-enrollment advanced history/theory subjects seemed to be offered less often, as the Faculty assigns more resources to higher enrolment breadth subjects. I understand that this isn't at all deliberate and just a product of the fact that enrolment and funding are numbers games, but I worry that this incentive structure will lead to the extinction of more intellectually challenging subjects. Also, I think the only reason I find my subject selection satisfactory is because my other degree lets me take law subjects instead when there aren't music subjects that interest me.

- Please consider the changes and how they will affect current Con students (not just how changes will resurrect the VCA). Performance studies should not be limited to Southbank (not least because Melba Hall is one of the best chamber venues in Melbourne). Melbourne University has had a fine reputation of performers graduating from its Parkville campus - please don't let this diminish. Also, please change the faculty name - VCAM is truly awful. It is a mouthful that suggests the intractability of the merger - Faculty of the College at the University? If Melbourne University is actually 'swallowing'

the VCA, there is little need to keep its name. If it is not and is formulating a re-designed faculty, there is also no need to capture its heritage (and if we wanted to ensure its heritage, there would have been no need to merge them).

- I think it is important to remember that the VCA is in a different place because it was always conceived of as a different institution - and I don't think it will easily be seen differently, at least not in the short- to medium-term. It is important that, whatever is decided, real attention is paid to perception: both institutions have fine reputations for what they do best, both are seen in their own right as fine schools. Careless implementation of this merger really does have the potential to destroy the reputation of both schools in the wider community, permanently damaging their chances of attracting the best young Music students in the country. With so few music programs now on offer in Melbourne, the position of music in this city is on the line. As a former music student, I ask that the all parties to this review please accept that this position is not ANYONE'S ideal, and try to rise above petty squabbles to make this new program truly world class.

- I am currently on exchange at the Sibelius Academy in Finland, which seems to have worked out a lot about the level of contact that music students need with teaching staff. While I understand that the structure of the school and funding is very different, the teaching style here is well worth having a look at and was not mentioned in the 'defining our future report'.

- I AM VERY SAD AND ANGRY. The design of the new course cares nothing for music or music students. Anyone serious or passionate about music will have to go interstate to study.

- I wish I had studied somewhere else.

**No. 363**

5 March 2010

Dear Review Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the future of the Victorian College of the Arts. We write to you as current Fine Art Photography students.

We enrolled in the VCA's Bachelor of Fine Art course on the basis of its internationally revered reputation of excellence in practical and theoretical intensive, specialist training, delivered in a practical amount of time.

We would like to strongly contest the assumption represented in Melbourne University's statements to the media that the VCA's practiced-based model for education is somehow unbalanced or lacking intellectually and in need of replacement.

Practical training does not and has not excluded academic involvement at the VCA. Practise & Performance as research or *for* research has long been accepted by the international arts community as of equivalent importance to other research models. We refer the Committee to the website of The Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies ([www.adsa.edu.au](http://www.adsa.edu.au)) which, as the peak academic body in the region, clearly recognises the importance of practice to academia.

In the VCA we have found an institution striving to serve the parallel and co-dependant career paths of artists and academics. During our time as students we have witnessed only the highest commitment from staff and students alike to being *both* a cutting-edge place of training and also of research. WE would suggest that any failure to deliver graduates of less than world class – and there has been no evidence of this to date – would be a failure caused by systematic under-resourcing, rather than a failure of ideology or curriculum.

In reference to the Discussion Paper, we offer you the following feedback:

#### **Review Committee**

We am concerned that only 2 of 9 staff and student representatives on the Review Committee were elected to their position. We am especially concerned that four unelected Heads of School are on the Committee, one of whom is Deputy Dean. Three of these Head of School are on the public record endorsing the merger and the Melbourne Model, whilst having little or no experience of pre-merger VCA. Clearly this composition casts doubt on the Review's independence and risks current staff and students self-censoring their submissions to the Review for fear of a real or perceived threat of repercussions for their work and study life. **We ask the Chair to replace the 7 unelected staff and student representatives with those directly elected by the current VCAM staff and students (from a selection of volunteer candidates as opposed to the Dean and Vice Chancellor choosing the candidates). We ask the Chair to consider adding an alumni representative to the panel.**

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We believe any move away from the intensive, studio-based training in defined areas of specialisation threatens the ability of VCA's students to compete with graduates of other schools like NIDA and WAAPA, and would make VCA graduates less work-ready. This would in turn impact upon arts business by causing a decline in the availability of Victorian-based graduate artisans with the skills required to enter the workforce.

We do support regular curriculum review at VCA to ensure the College continues to meet the rapidly changing demands of students and their future employers. All reviews should include extensive consultation with all stakeholders and operate independently from VCA and University of Melbourne (UoM) management.

#### **Funding & Structure**

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Accordingly, we suggest that direct Arts Ministry funding (through inclusion in the Australian Roundtable program) at levels comparable to NIDA, is the best hope for a financially sound, independent VCA. We encourage the UoM to aggressively pursue this option, drawing upon the great public and industry interest in VCA evident in recent times.

In the interim, we support calls for the Federal Government to immediately reverse the 2005 \$5m p/a funding cut to VCA. We believe the Federal Government is putting great strain on both the University and VCA by holding off on this review until 2012, and is thereby threatening elite arts education in Australia.

We also support calls for the Victorian Government to commit to sustained funding for VCA to supplement the Federal contribution. We support the Victorian Shadow Minister for the Arts' suggestion that this sum be in the ballpark of \$6m p/a or alternatively in the guise of a sustained contribution to VCA infrastructure development.

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As secondary structural options, we would also support investigation of VCA being transferred to another University that was willing to retain the practical nature of VCA's courses OR VCA becoming an autonomous VET institution. In either case, the Federal and State Governments would need to recognise the unique cost of providing elite arts education and fund VCA's new guise appropriately.

We support the pursuit of new income streams (e.g. extended post-graduate programs, open programs, pursuing international students) and believe VCA's best chance of obtaining this income is by committing to the supply of intensive, studio-based training which is most attractive to the arts education marketplace.

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We support a greater, active involvement by both the Victorian State and Federal Governments at VCA, to ensure Australia's arts education and arts business landscapes are better safeguarded than has been evident throughout 2009.

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VCA's commitment to provide individual and small group tuition within an arts practice environment with an emphasis on context, performance, production and exhibition and with studio practice as its core."

## **Students & Staff**

We are concerned that many talented and valuable teaching staff have not returned VCA in 2010, and that these positions have not been adequately replenished despite a noticeable increase in the intake of first year students. The photography department has lost three staff members this year, leaving us with only two Sessional Technicians, one permanent & two Sessional Lecturers for Studio Studies, shared between over 60 Bachelor of Fine Art students, in addition to Honours, Masters & Post Grad students. We are concerned that the technical, conceptual and professional learning outcomes of the photography department are becoming condescended. We would like to see more funding available to all departments for increased permanent & sessional staff placements and more contact hours available to students.

We also express concern that suggestions the Melbourne Model would be applied to VCA, and news of staff leaving, may have impacted upon VCA's attractiveness to high calibre applicants.

As such, we would support new mechanisms to actively retain quality staff, such as formal, quarterly opportunities for VCA staff to supply feedback to VCAM Management (both anonymously and publicly).

We would also encourage a renewed drive to attract high calibre students as part of any 're-launch' of an independent VCA, through emphasising the College's continued commitment to providing 100% practical education across the entire arts spectrum.

## **Future**

We look forward to VCA emerging from the turmoil of the last year as a stronger institution, capable of answering student demand for the highest level of intensive, wholly practical-based, studio training across the entire arts spectrum. We are confident the protection of this ideal will ensure VCA graduates will continue to have the best chance of making a career in one of the most competitive industries in the country. In doing this, we also support a vibrant Australian artistic culture and ever-expanding arts business.

The function performed by the Victorian College of the Arts in the Performing Arts cannot be fulfilled by WAAPA or NIDA. The disparate orientations of each of the three elite drama schools – NIDA, WAAPA *and the VCA*, produce graduates of completely different kinds. The continued contribution of a diverse range of artists is fundamental to the future of the Arts in this country. The VCA is distinctive and it cannot be replaced.

## **No. 364**

The VCA Review Committee  
C/- University of Melbourne  
By email: [vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au)

5 March 2010

## **Re: Discussion Paper**

Dear Review Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the Discussion Paper, comment on what is happening at Victorian College of the Arts, and to have input into its future. As a reflection of ongoing meetings, information dissemination and response gathering, this letter voices the concerns of all Undergraduate Painting students in the School of Art.

## **GENERAL CONCERNS**

For both incoming and continuing students who are experiencing the transition to the new model of education at the VCA from within the painting department, there's a sense of imminent threat to the unique and invaluable nature of the educational model that already exists. We hold to this model as a fluid ideal, something that has

evolved from a sound historical foundation, and will continue to evolve according to the culture within which it is firmly situated, and by which it is heavily influenced.

Changes within any institution are inevitable, but there is great concern about the potential for changes to be made without consideration of the culturally embedded place the VCA holds within the broader arts community. Our emphasis is upon changes that potentially lead to deterioration of the vocational nature of studio-based education here at the VCA. As is, we enjoy a challenging environment with what we believe to be a healthy balance between studio and theoretical curriculum. To us it functions as a thriving, proactive and interactive microcosm, and said deterioration begins for us at the ground level of curricular structure and support.

### **SPECIFIC CONCERNS**

An immediate area of concern for painting students involves the evident cuts in staff numbers, staff hours and amenities access, each of which has a significant impact on the quality of our education.

Not only have we lost highly valued teachers, but the uncertainty surrounding their employment has affected the morale of the student and staff bodies. This particular learning environment relies upon a diversity of individual perspectives and skills. Never before has it been so widely acknowledged that historical, social and cultural narratives are constructed from multiple voices. Given the variety of individuals within the student body and the interdisciplinary nature of arts practise within the 'real world', the value of exposure to varied influences cannot be underestimated.

In addition to the inherent value of diversity, each staff member brings an extra-curricular element to their teaching. For some this is unquantifiable, involving indirect contact with or exposure to their individual professional arts practise. Others offer a very direct conduit to external arts practise, engaging students in specific projects that lead to very real exhibition experience.

As so much student work depends on technical advice and material consultation, the role of the technician in the painting department has been indispensable. Currently, at the beginning of 2010, there is no technician for the entire painting department. We fail to see how the painting department can effectively run without a technician, one of its essential components, and regard this lack of provision as such as indicative of student needs being overlooked.

One of the side effects of losing sessional staff members is increased pressure on the more permanent staff members. The permanent staff members represent the core of the learning experience at VCA. We are concerned that this core will become significantly weakened by the redistribution of the workload previously undertaken by the sessional staff members. It is already noticeably more difficult to obtain one-on-one support within the studios, as a direct result of fewer teachers and a larger student intake. This is bound to impact upon student development across the board.

To summarise, all of the painting staff contribute to the richness of the learning environment in the painting department and offer an insight into the working terrain of contemporary art in Melbourne. Without a diversity of criticism, a rich array of support and a real relationship with what happens after art school, the work produced by the students will be less informed, and therefore potentially less developed and less able to achieve the high standard that it has achieved until now.

### **CONCLUSION**

As a department we support the specific concerns put forward by the Save VCA campaigners. We have read and understood their material, and wish to endorse the suggestions made within their response to the discussion paper.

The objective of our response letter is to inform you of internal issues specific to the painting department, and to offer you insight into the basic elements we most value within our degree course. Despite the fact that it is difficult to measure the success of artistic outcomes, the far-reaching status and reputation of the VCA as a successful and exciting educational institution is impossible to overlook. We're proud to belong to such a vibrant artistic community, one that holds great attraction to students of the past, present and the future. We ask that you consider this unique community standing, and strive to preserve the integrity of the college as a whole when making decisions about its identity and direction.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**No. 365**

The VCA Review Committee  
C/- University of Melbourne

5 March 2010

By email: [vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au)

**Re: Discussion Paper**

Dear Review Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the future of the Victorian College of the Arts. I write to you as a current third year Visual Art (Painting) student at the College, contemplating further study at VCA or elsewhere.

As a mature age student who already holds a Bachelor of Arts (Art History & Curatorship) degree with first class honours from the Australian National University in Canberra, my decision to train at the VCA was based on three factors. Firstly, the appeal of the VCA over other art schools lay in the high calibre of teachers available to me as a student. These teachers have since lost, or resigned (in protest), their positions. Secondly, I was attracted by the VCA's reputation as an art school which fostered a climate of seriousness, 'readiness' and dedication to a lifetime of practice in an industry renowned as one of the toughest. This reputation, I feel, was founded largely on a selection process determined by talent and commitment, not age quotas. Finally, the VCA's unique, independent, training based model of education appealed to me precisely because I am an older student and sought a degree structure which prioritised training that would ready me for the realities of an independent studio practice – not a career in academia. A shift in emphasis toward a more academic stream in the Fine Arts curriculum would remove what initially appealed, not only to older students such as myself, but to any training artist who is aware of the high percentage of 'abandoned' practices in the early stages of an art career that is not properly founded in independent learning skills.

In reference to the Discussion Paper, I offer you the following feedback:

I wholly endorse the recommendations submitted by the SaveVCA organisation in response to this Discussion Paper. In particular, I wish to express my concern for the independence of the Review Committee and ask that representatives be elected in a more democratic and truly representative manner.

Further, with regards to curriculum changes, I support the retention of the VCA as an elite arts training institution with a focus on intensive, practical, studio-based training. I do not believe there is a need to add 'breadth' to the VCA programs through the introduction of the Melbourne Model. I believe any move away from intensive, studio-based training in Fine Art threatens the ability of VCA's students to compete with graduates of other art schools like SCA and COFA, and would make VCA graduates less studio-ready. This would in turn impact upon the vibrant arts culture Melbourne enjoys and its reputation as the central contemporary art 'scene' in the country.

With regards to funding and structure, I support the view that the optimum outcome for VCA is to be an independent institution, capable of awarding its own degrees and managing its own curriculum. As such, I support calls for the Federal Government to immediately reverse funding cuts to VCA and calls for the Victorian Government to commit to sustained funding for VCA. I support the demerger of UoM Music and VCA Music from the 2011 academic year.

I firmly believe that the current senior leadership of Victorian College of the Arts & Music does not necessarily represent the views of the current staff and students and as such, support calls for a review of VCAM management as part of any structural and/or funding changes.

I feel the University of Melbourne's 'School Leaver Quota' of 80% is unrealistic for a practical based training facility such as VCA and dangerous for a school which currently enjoys such a great reputation.

Finally, and most significantly, I express concern that many talented and valuable teaching staff will not be returning to VCA in 2010. The sessional staff within the painting department have been drastically reduced with significant detriment to my personal and my peers' continued development as artists. One exceptionally talented teacher in particular (and by way of example) is not returning and this is a decision which will impact upon my personal practice profoundly. As such, I would support new mechanisms to actively retain quality staff.

**No. 366**

The VCA Review Committee  
C/- University of Melbourne

5 March 2010

By email: [vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:vcam-feedback@unimelb.edu.au)

**Re: Discussion Paper**

Dear Review Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the future of the Victorian College of the Arts. I write to you as a Second Year Painting student, from within the School of Art.

I contributed to a collective letter, submitted on behalf of the Painting Department student body as a whole, but would like here to offer individual support to the general consensus response to the VCA Discussion Paper, as it has been expressed by the Save VCA lobby group.

I am a mature age student and the VCA attracted me with its reputation as a thriving community that holds a proactive position within real world arts communities. The standard of education has promised an incredible entry-point to external communities as such, and has so far delivered. I, like many other students past and present, am distressed by many of the proposed changes, and the cuts that have already been made. These have already had a negative effect on our own department, not to mention surrounding departments with which we are closely connected.

In reference to the Discussion Paper, I offer you the following feedback:

**Review Committee**

I am concerned that only 2 of 9 staff and student representatives on the Review Committee were elected to their position. I am especially concerned that four unelected Heads of School are on the Committee, one of whom is Deputy Dean. Three of these Head of School are on the public record endorsing the merger and the Melbourne Model, whilst having little or no experience of pre-merger VCA. Clearly this composition casts doubt on the Review's independence and risks current staff and students self-censoring their submissions to the Review for fear of a real or perceived threat of repercussions for their work and study life. I ask the Chair to replace the 7 unelected staff and student representatives with those directly elected by the current VCAM staff and students (from a selection of volunteer candidates as opposed to the Dean and Vice Chancellor choosing the candidates). I ask the Chair to consider adding an alumni representative to the panel.

**Curriculum**

I support the retention of the VCA as an elite arts training institution with a focus on intensive, practical, studio-based training. VCA should continue to offer degree-award courses across all art streams including Drama, Dance, Music Theatre, Production, Art, Music and Film and Television.

I do not believe there is a need to add 'breadth' to the VCA programs through the introduction of the Melbourne Model.

I believe any move away from the intensive, studio-based training in defined areas of specialisation threatens the ability of VCA's students to compete with graduates of other schools like NIDA and WAAPA, and would make VCA graduates less work-ready. This would in turn impact upon arts business by causing a decline in the availability of Victorian-based graduate artisans with the skills required to enter the workforce.

I do support regular curriculum review at VCA to ensure the College continues to meet the rapidly changing demands of students and their future employers. All reviews should include extensive consultation with all stakeholders and operate independently from VCA and University of Melbourne (UoM) management.

**Funding & Structure**

I support the view that the optimum outcome for VCA is to be an independent institution, capable of awarding its own degrees and managing its own curriculum.

Accordingly, I suggest that direct Arts Ministry funding (through inclusion in the Australian Roundtable program) at levels comparable to NIDA, is the best hope for a financially sound, independent VCA. I encourage the UoM to aggressively pursue this option, drawing upon the great public and industry interest in VCA evident in recent times.

In the interim, I support calls for the Federal Government to immediately reverse the 2005 \$5m p/a funding cut to VCA. I believe the Federal Government is putting great strain on both the University and VCA by holding off on this review until 2012, and is thereby threatening elite arts education in Australia.

I also support calls for the Victorian Government to commit to sustained funding for VCA to supplement the Federal contribution. I support the Victorian Shadow Minister for the Arts' suggestion that this sum be in the ballpark of \$6m p/a or alternatively in the guise of a sustained contribution to VCA infrastructure development.

I support the demerger of UoM Music and VCA Music from the 2011 academic year. I believe this outcome would return choice to the music education sphere, so that students can choose between a Melbourne Model based degree with strong ties to scholarship and research (UoM Music) and completely practical, studio-based training (VCA Music). Demerger would also address the unworkable constraints of having two music campuses. I support this demerger regardless of whether VCA remains a faculty of the University or becomes independent.

As secondary structural options, I would also support investigation of VCA being transferred to another University that was willing to retain the practical nature of VCA's courses OR VCA becoming an autonomous VET institution. In either case, the Federal and State Governments would need to recognise the unique cost of providing elite arts education and fund VCA's new guise appropriately.

I support the pursuit of new income streams (e.g. extended post-graduate programs, open programs, pursuing international students) and believe VCA's best chance of obtaining this income is by committing to the supply of intensive, studio-based training which is most attractive to the arts education marketplace.

## **Leadership**

I am concerned the current senior leadership of Victorian College of the Arts & Music does not necessarily represent the views of the current staff and students. As such, I would support a review of VCAM management as part of any structural and/or funding changes, with particular preference for allowing students and staff a direct say in appointments of the Dean, Deputy Dean and Heads of School.

I support a greater, active involvement by both the Victorian State and Federal Governments at VCA, to ensure Australia's arts education and arts business landscapes are better safeguarded than has been evident throughout 2009.

## **Accountability**

I would urge the University of Melbourne to address contraventions of the Heads of Agreement that merged UoM with VCA. Particularly:

- Reinstating the VCA name.
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## **Students & Staff**

I express concern that many talented and valuable teaching staff will not be returning to VCA in 2010.

I also express concern that suggestions the Melbourne Model would be applied to VCA, and news of staff leaving, may have impacted upon VCA's attractiveness to high calibre applicants.

As such, I would support new mechanisms to actively retain quality staff, such as formal, quarterly opportunities for VCA staff to supply feedback to VCAM Management (both anonymously and publicly).

I would also encourage a renewed drive to attract high calibre students as part of any 're-launch' of an independent VCA, through emphasising the College's continued commitment to providing 100% practical education across the entire arts spectrum.

## **Future**

I look forward to VCA emerging from the turmoil of the last year as a stronger institution, capable of answering student demand for the highest level of intensive, wholly practical-based, studio training across the entire arts spectrum. I am confident the protection of this ideal will ensure VCA graduates will continue to have the best chance of making a career in one of the most competitive industries in the country. In doing this, we also support a vibrant Australian artistic culture and ever-expanding arts business.

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## **Re: Discussion Paper**

Dear Review Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the future of the Victorian College of the Arts. I write to you as a current second year student in the Bachelor of Fine Arts.

From the time I was 17 years old, living in India I aspired to the best art schools. My move to Melbourne and 4 years of hard work later, being able to attend the VCA as a local student is a dream come true. I believe it is the culture of the college and the city that enable me to express my life in the way that I do.

In reference to the Discussion Paper, I offer you the following feedback:

## **Review Committee**

I am concerned that only 2 of 9 staff and student representatives on the Review Committee were elected to their position. I am especially concerned that four unelected Heads of School are on the Committee, one of whom is Deputy Dean. Three of these Head of School are on the public record endorsing the merger and the Melbourne Model, whilst having little or no experience of pre-merger VCA. Clearly this composition casts doubt on the Review's independence and risks current staff and students self-censoring their submissions to the Review for fear of a real or perceived threat of repercussions for their work and study life. I ask the Chair to replace the 7 unelected staff and student representatives with those directly elected by the current VCAM staff and students (from a selection of volunteer candidates as opposed to the Dean and Vice Chancellor choosing the candidates). I ask the Chair to consider adding an alumni representative to the panel.

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VCAMSA  
SURVEY OF VCAM STUDENTS  
2010

## Background

In order to contribute to the wider discussion about the future of the Faculty of the VCA and Music (VCAM), the Student Union's VCAM Student Association, or VCAMSA, distributed an online survey in February 2010 to VCAM students via various student groups and constituencies. 56 valid responses were recorded and the following are findings from these responses.

## Main findings

### Respondents' profile

As shown on Tables 1, 2 and 3, the biggest group of respondents is current students (77%), undertaking a Bachelor degree (87%) in either Music or Art discipline (65%).

Response	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Current student	43	77%
Graduated and awarded with a degree	7	13%
Recently finished my studies and awaiting my graduation ceremony	5	9%
VCASS student	1	2%
Started studying at VCAM but have postponed my studies for now	0	0%
Studied at VCAM but left before finishing my degree	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 Response to *Which of these best describes your study status at VCAM?*

Response	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Music	20	36%
Art	16	29%
Film and Television	6	11%
Drama	5	9%
Production	5	9%
Dance	3	5%

Music Theatre	1	2%
Puppetry	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 Response to *What discipline are you undertaking/did you undertake at VCAM?*

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Bachelor	47	84%
Master (by coursework or research)	5	9%
PhD	2	4%
Graduate certificate or diploma	1	2%
High school diploma	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 Response to *What type of degree are you undertaking/did you attain at VCAM?*

#### Importance of the name 'Victorian College of the Arts' in decision to study at the VCAM

71% of respondents indicated that the Victorian College of the Arts name was 'very important' in their decision to study at the institution, with a further 21% indicating that it was 'quite important'.

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Very important	40	71%
Quite important	11	20%
Not important at all	4	7%
Less important	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 Response to *How important was the name 'Victorian College of the Arts' to your decision to study there?*

#### Hours per week respondents thought should be spent on practice-based learning

An overwhelming majority, 95%, of respondents indicated more than 20 hours of practice-based learning should be spent per week. 29% indicated between 21 and 30 hours, 41% indicated between 31 and 40 hours and 25% indicated more than 40 hours.

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Up to 10	1	2%
11 – 20	1	2%
21 – 30	16	29%
31 – 40	23	41%
More than 40	14	25%
No answer	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 Response to *How many hours per week do you think should be spent on practice-based learning?*

**Respondents’ opinions on course- and general VCAM-related matters**

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements about their course and the VCAM in general. The following are these statements and their evaluations.

***“Learning the theory behind my craft (e.g. history of theatre, dance analysis, anatomy, politics behind theatre etc.) is important to my overall education”***

61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that learning theory for their craft is important in their overall education. 25% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. A mean response of closer to 4 suggests that the overall response to this statement is somewhat positive.

Level of agreement	No. of respondents	% of respondents
1 =Strongly disagree	2	4%
Disagree	5	9%
Neutral	14	25%
Agree	14	25%
5 = Strongly agree	20	36%
Not applicable/no answer	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6 Level of agreement with *“Learning the theory behind my craft (e.g. history of theatre, dance analysis, anatomy, politics behind theatre etc.) is important to my overall education”*

Std. dev.            1.14  
 Mean                3.82

***“Having academic skills such as researching and essay or report writing is beneficial for me”***

45% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed while 34% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. A mean response of closer to 3 suggests that opinions largely differ among respondents.

Level of agreement	No. of respondents	% of respondents
1 =Strongly disagree	7	13%
Disagree	18	32%
Neutral	11	20%
Agree	13	23%
5 =Strongly agree	6	11%
Not applicable/no answer	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7 Level of agreement with *“Having academic skills such as researching and essay or report writing is beneficial for me”*

Std. dev.            1.23  
 Mean                2.87

***“The amount of time devoted to practice-based learning in my program, including external classes, is sufficient”***

54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 23% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Again, with a mean response that is closer to 3, it is assumed that opinions differ among respondents.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
1 = Strongly disagree	5	9%
Disagree	6	11%
Neutral	13	23%
Agree	21	38%
5 = Strongly agree	9	16%
Not applicable/no answer	2	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 8 Level of agreement with “*The amount of time devoted to practice-based learning in my program, including external classes, is sufficient*”

Std. dev.        1.18  
 Mean            3.43

***“There is a good mixture of practice-based and written assessment in my program”***

55% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 20% neither agreed nor disagreed.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
1 = Strongly disagree	3	5%
Disagree	8	14%
Neutral	11	20%
Agree	17	30%
5 = Strongly agree	14	25%
Not applicable/no answer	3	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 Level of agreement with “*There is a good mixture of practice-based and written assessment in my program*”

Std. dev.        1.20  
 Mean            3.58

***“I would have preferred to focus on practice and attain a vocational degree rather than a full degree (like Bachelor, Master, etc.)”***

A mean response of 3 suggests that, again, respondents are mostly divided on this. The percentages show how almost evenly divided opinions are with 29% responding in the positive (agree or strongly agree), 28% in the negative (disagree or strongly disagree), and 27% remaining neutral.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
1 = Strongly disagree	8	14%
Disagree	8	14%
Neutral	15	27%
Agree	9	16%
5 = Strongly agree	10	18%
Not applicable/no answer	6	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10 Level of agreement with “*I would have preferred to focus on practice and attain a vocational degree rather than a full degree (like Bachelor, Master, etc.)*”

Std. dev.        1.34  
 Mean            3.10

***“Overall, I am/was satisfied with my course structure”***

55% of respondents agree or strongly agreed and 25 % were neutral.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
1 =Strongly disagree	5	9%
Disagree	3	5%
Neutral	14	25%
Agree	18	32%
5 = Strongly agree	13	23%
Not applicable/no answer	3	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 11 Level of agreement with “*Overall, I am/was satisfied with my course structure*”

Std. dev.        1.20  
 Mean            3.58

***“I feel that I have received/am receiving a well-rounded education that enables me to compete with the best in the world”***

70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their education enables them to compete with the best in the world. A mean response closer to 4 also suggests that the overall response is quite positive.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Strongly disagree	3	5%
Disagree	6	11%
Neutral	6	11%
Agree	14	25%
Strongly agree	25	45%
Not applicable/no answer	2	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 12 Level of agreement with “*I feel that I have received/am receiving a well-rounded education that enables me to compete with the best in the world*”

Std. dev.            1.24  
 Mean                3.96

***“I enjoy(ed) the common subjects offered by VCAM’s Centre for Ideas”***

Percentages show that opinions are again significantly divided among those who agreed or strongly agreed (34%), those who were neutral (29%) and those who disagreed or strongly disagreed (25%).

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Strongly disagree	8	14%
Disagree	6	11%
Neutral	16	29%
Agree	10	18%
Strongly agree	9	16%
Not applicable/no answer	7	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 13 Level of agreement with “*I enjoy(ed) the common subjects offered by VCAM’s Centre for Ideas*”

Std. dev.            1.32  
 Mean                3.12

***“I know about the Melbourne Model and its offering of breadth subjects”***

Over half (57%) of respondents know about the Melbourne Model, while 25% were undecided and 9% claim to not know. These suggest that a majority know about it but the extent of that knowledge vary.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Strongly disagree	4	7%
Disagree	1	2%
Neutral	14	25%
Agree	15	27%
Strongly agree	17	30%
Not applicable/no answer	5	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 14 Level of agreement with “*I know about the Melbourne Model and its offering of breadth subjects*”

Std. dev.            1.17  
Mean                 3.78

***“It is important that my lectures and tutorials all take place at VCAM (Southbank)”***

91% of respondents agree or strongly agree that lectures and tutorials should take place in Southbank.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Strongly disagree	1	2%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	1	2%
Agree	6	11%
Strongly agree	45	80%
Not applicable/no answer	3	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 15 Level of agreement with “*It is important that my lectures and tutorials all take place at VCAM (Southbank)*”

Std. dev.            0.67  
Mean                 4.77

## Qualitative responses

<b>Comments or suggestions on how your course could be improved</b>
<p>In printmaking we have lost all of our sessional staff which has meant that we now have absolutely no input from outside our course, which has had a real negative impact both on our ability to access feedback, and on our ability to learn to understand the industry we're supposed to be being trained for.</p>
<p>LEAVE IT AS IT WAS</p>
<p>For music improv, the focus has to be on playing.</p> <p>It doesn't matter how much you learn about Jazz, if you don't "tackle the beast" (practice) every day the reality is, is that you won't be a very good Jazz Musician.</p> <p>Lots of small ensemble, keep the one-on-one lessons, focus on recital and everything will be fine.</p>
<p>Don't separate subjects so much eg. with the BA of Music Performance Repertoire, SRS classes included Alexander technique for woodwind instruments which was fundamental in understanding how to better control our bodies whilst playing. At Melbourne, this is a separate class that you pick thus if students do not select it, they'll be missing out on a fundamental skill.</p>
<p>Masters by coursework, the mix is Ok, some research/writing and mostly prac. Focus on exhibiting in seminars and shows. Need to reinstate the ART Forum lunchtime talks - artists present their careers was really great.</p>
<p>There needs to be more guidance for first year students. Lecturers need to communicate expectations better.</p>
<p>Having the history of theatre and its influences on politics and being able to write a concise essay outlining historical, social and modern values therein does not help me on stage in the middle of a monologue. Rather, having to learn them would lessen my practical experience and therefore detract from my future performances.</p>
<p>I have filled in the section above based on my studies as a Grad Dip and Masters student, because obviously a PhD needs more of a written component.</p>
<p>It would be beneficial to have a history class added to the music-improvisation course, but not at the expense of practice based learning. Ultimately, I came to VCA for hands on learning, but I would not be adverse to at least one subject that allowed us to continue to develop writing and analytical skills. CFI provides this to an extent, but not in a specialised way that relates directly to our discipline.</p>
<p>Photography - more time spent learning the craft of photography</p>
<p>Even more practical classes... not ones that cost money via external tutors, but ones that students could even run, such as more actor/director workshops, where the students double as actors for their classmates.</p>
<p>Pre 2005 there were additional subjects in the music school, which were cancelled during my time there, due to the funding cuts. Hours started to get cut back even as early as 2007. However we were able to supplement our practice based learning by consulting with staff and organising our own rehearsals and workshops in and out of university. Due to this experience I felt I still was able to get a well rounded practice focussed education, despite the small cuts back then. In the future, these performance based classes should be reinstated, not reduced.</p>
<p>More, contact hours and studio time.</p>

In the survey above, it is clear that I am happy with my course structure and hours. I must emphasise that this is because I am completing my bachelor in the old course structure, which is being 'taught out'. I do not believe that if I were doing the new course, I would have such positive feedback in terms of practical hours, practice based vs written assessments and course structure.

Music Theatre 2005-2006 was almost entirely practically based which is the original and central reason for my taking the course. In the performing arts industry, practical training is ESSENTIAL and if any less time was spent on practical studies, with more theoretical studies introduced, we wouldn't stand a chance when entering the immediate world of auditions and castings as is the natural progression after graduation. Competition is far too high to forsake practical training.

I am in photography and the curriculum should include video. Also it would be great to have more technical classes (for example photoshop etc) and more teachers- last semester we couldn't even book a tutorial in the last few weeks because it was so full (they layed off a number of casual staff.)

The acting course is wonderful, nothing should be changed. It equips me to be an actor, not a person with a generic degree that happens to like and dabble in acting. There's a difference. A real difference.

The animation course could be improved if student could use the studio and work till 11.30 pm at night instead of the school closing at 10.00 pm. This means we could animated a few more shots and would make all the difference to meet the tight deadlines. Also would be better if Masters by Research and PHD students could use the facilities freely as the practical component of the study is at least 60% of the curriculum!

The way an artist becomes a Master is by immersing themselves in making art, not attending lectures - the VCA structure gets the right balance, if it changes to a very academic degree, it will be a real shame. Does anyone out there listen to what artists want or are bureaucrats deciding how to teach artists?

I believe it would be beneficial for classical singers to have the chance to sing with an orchestra. This is a standard practice in the operatic world, so I believe while not only being a thoroughly enjoyable experience, it would be highly beneficial.

It would be great if there were more practical classes held, however due to lack of staff I only have Art History, CFI and a group critic of my work if I am lucky, once every 4-5 weeks. I would much prefer to be learning about different techniques practically from a staff member, rather than having to go look in a library and learn from a book. This is currently what I have to do due to lack of staffing.

Having a stronger practical connection with the film industry would make the graduates a lot more employable. Things like attachments and work experience. It is only with a hands on background and a solid show reel that one is going to find work in film after uni. Studying history and theory is important but not as relevant to a cause like Film and television. This is what a real Film school has over just studying film at a university. THAT is why I wanted to go to the VCA over any other institution in Australia.

There needs to be greater emphasis on industry standards and interaction with industry contacts whilst training.

more focus on the practical, get more visiting art teachers or technicians to help students with the practical side

more flexibility with subjects. it would be good to be able to choose electives in other areas of study eg. art students being able to choose a subject from the film department

I am doing a Bachelor of Music Performance and rarely perform as part of my degree. We only have 13 1/2 hours of contact time in the degree. The actual subjects i take are fantastic but we don't have nearly enough time devoted to each area to be able to cover enough ground.

I believe that both the practical and academic/theoretical training should be far more intensive. Although the standard of practical training is good, it could be better. I do usually feel that in workshops, in SRS, in ensemble tutoring that we run out of time (or money, I suppose).

I do also feel that the level of aural and theoretical training is too basic. These classes should be streamed from the beginning so students can work at the level they are at. E.g. A single theory/music history class for all students is quite ridiculous. Everyone enters the degree at a different level in their theoretical training and thus their learning needs will be vastly different. Students who have little of no training find it difficult; students who have a higher level of training get bored. The teachers are already overworked and there's not much they can do about it. Everyone ends up compromised.

Increased after hours access to studios and the workshop. Art students need time to become familiar with materials and techniques. They need a safe supervised environment with technicians that have the technical expertise from the students can learn.

### **General comments or suggestions**

I know that the Melbourne Model's offering of breadth subjects cannot compare to the breadth subjects already offered by the VCA, be it from the Centre for Ideas, or each department's own breadth subjects. For instance in the Music school we had a host of breadth subjects that brought us out of our specific area of study and educated us in broader areas but still maintained relevance to our education and careers as performing artists.

Without more then 40 hours practical we can not make a film and compete in this very competitive film industry where our films are our ticket to furthering our careers in this industry. Our knowledge of film theory and history (which we can study at other universities) does not teach us the know how of how to make a successful film!

All elite art schools practice along a similar line to the VCA globally, schools that become too broad or academically focused don't produce the best artists - I am doing my Masters now in case the course structure changes and adopts the Melbourne model - this is really going to be a failure.

I am receiving an education that enables me to not only compete with the best in the world, but be the best in the world. Rounded or not, this course I am undertaking at the VCA is enabling me to be the best i can be. This is not achieved by learning something else, when one could spend that time learning more about ones' chosen vocation. When this is done, however, it encourages the student of the craft to perform at a mediocre level, which is not right, in any circumstances.

Why would I want to go up to Melbourne Universtiy at Parkville? My studio is at Southbank, it does not make sense to waste time and energy travelling for an hour subject. We all know how congested the city can get during the day. That would not be a good use of my time during the day if I was travelling to and from campuses. I could use this time to be being creative practically in my studio. It is difficult to process a film or draw on a bumpy tram jam packed with people.

It is extremely important to me that all my classes/tutorials etc take place at Southbank.

Whilst I acknowledge that essay writing skills are important, I do not see them as being particularly beneficial to me as a musician. I am studying at the VCA so that I may become the best musician that I can possibly be. For this reason, I want to spend the next 3 years focusing intensively on music and music alone. If, as many would argue, I find myself unable to succeed as a musician, I will most likely return to university to pursue a different career path. If and when this happens, I will gladly focus on my essay writing and all that goes with an academic career.

At the end of the day, I do not believe that studying one breadth subject each semester is going to be nearly as beneficial to me as the practical subject it is likely to replace.

I spent 12 years of schooling focusing intensively on academia. I studied a wide range of different subjects and worked very hard to achieve results that would allow me to study whatever I wanted. As it turned out, music turned out to be that thing, and I would like the opportunity to study that with the same tenacity and commitment that I put into my schooling.

Students of the VCA have made a conscious decision to focus on their particular art form, and I believe we should be given every chance to excel and succeed in what it is we are passionate about. The only way that this may be achieved is if we are able to focus SOLELY on what it is we are studying, without the distraction of breadth subjects.

i'd just like to say that we learn the theory through the practice. The amount of research that goes into a play, especially for an actor, is clearly being underestimated. I've learned more from doing plays (from the greeks through to contemporary) than i did in a bachelor of arts/communications. I am already doing a degree of breadth. The amount of professions, people, skills, cultures and histories that i've had to delve into has been unbelievable. The great thing about it is that we learn the theory in a rehearsal studio and then we can get up on the floor and try it out for ourselves. you can't beat that! Lecture halls are not inspiring places and they only accomodate for one type of learning when we know for a fact that there are many types of learning and intelligences. In my experience, my program has accomodated all of these types of learning mainly because we have small classes and our teachers are aware of the amount of knowledge and awareness an actor needs. The fact is, because the idea of autonomy has been implanted in us since day one, if we want to know something, we go and learn it ourselves, and it's quite clear we'll learn more by teaching ourselves than going to a lecture theatre with 500 people. What has to change is the university and it's methods of teaching, especially when you have a diverse mix of people and intelligences.

Speaking of wanky arts subjects...CFI. How do I say this?? Waste. Of. Time. With the exception of the Feldenkreis elective in 2nd year, I learnt NOTHING. And I'm guessing around at least 90% of students feel that way. I have not met anyone who enjoys the subject.

It would be far, far more worthwhile for students to learn about other disciplines by observing or even taking some classes. E.g. music students watching or perhaps even participating in a dance class so they can understand the deep connection between the disciplines. Or maybe dancers taking an art class so they can see how movement and grace can translate into light and colours on a page. "Interdisciplinary practice" should be about showing the physical, emotional and intellectual connections between the different art forms. It should be something people can experience, something real and something thought-provoking. It shouldn't be about a whole bunch of students falling asleep whilst some inarticulate "guest lecturer" goes on about...well nothing really.

I don't have anything against "breadth subjects" as I think they could be fantastic for some students (e.g. those who would like to start/continue a foreign language). I just don't feel that they should be forced onto people. They should be offered as an option, after all, 25% represents a significant portion of time dedicated to something outside the main area of your degree. It also represents a huge waste of time and money if students aren't interested in pursuing other areas.

And yes, of course I want to take all my classes at Southbank. I travel enough as it is. And what about people

who have instruments to carry? Like a double bass??

**Whether they have had an impact on you or not, please tell us what you think about the changes happening at VCAM**

the cutting of sessional staff, coupled with the shortening of the semesters, and eventually the downplaying of practical training is really unacceptable enough, but the manner in which Melbourne University have gone about this, bullying and completely non-transparent, is equally damaging to the college. everywhere on campus morale is low; the teachers show up later and later to classes each week, there's no spark anywhere anymore. it's like everyone's just waiting for the end.

BRING BACK VCA LOGO!!

I dislike the idea of referring to building numbers, rather than say meet in 871, say let's meet in Grant Street Theater!

I dislike the idea of starting several weeks later, bring back Feb 1st starts!

Give us back the original course AND our original building!

I would like to state that although I believe my education was a world-class standard and allowed me to compete against others in my field, (as with undertaking honours the program - I believe there has been very little change to the staff and program) it will no longer be for the years below me. These artists have every right to learn from the technicians and lecturers that I did, and most of our staff are no longer with us (due to staff cuts and unreasonable changes). This impacts on both students' practical learning and their marks. Even if we do not consider the students, these people that taught me have either lost or stepped away from their jobs, and have expressed that it will impact them all financially - and they are artists themselves.

It is scary to think that one of the best music courses in the country is in risk of becoming a shell of what it is now.

Small class sizes (particularly ensemble) and its focus on practice is something that cannot change.

Please just tell VCAM students what is going on more frequently. A lot of VCA enrolled students have no idea what's going on or where they are now located for classes. VCA students don't even know how they will earn their credit points for orchestral studies if there is no compulsory orchestra for them to take part in (if they miss out on getting into the Melbourne Uni Symphony).

Very badly managed, lack of real consultation and I deeply feel the VCAM should be independently funded as is NIDA and dAIS etc.

Im not completely aware of the changes.

Though, of those I am aware of:

The closure of the Puppetry course deeply saddens me, it's an absolute shame to lose such a special course. Truly one of it's kind.

So far, what I have seen of the building reconstructions/allocations, seem to be okay.

Joining the production and drama students into the one building could be a positive move towards better networking/socialising on campus. The schools are too seperate as they are/were. There is no 'vibe' on campus.

In terms of staff loss, I certainly hope there was a good reason.

The fact is performing artist have a strong sense of what they want to do and how they want to acheive it before they select an institution. Practical based education is fundamental to the vocations in question which benefit from this school's alumni. Removing a relative percentage of the practical aspects of courses offered would greatly damage a VCA alumni's affectiveness in their chosen industry. It matters very little if they have the theory if they haven't the experience to implement it.

VCA and schools like it were set up in the absence of repertory companies and readily accessible professional theatre groups (Dance, Drama, Musicals) who could offer experience or the theatrical version of an apprenticeship. It is virtually impossible in this country to gain highly specific skills of that type without spending a remarkable sum of money on private lessons (Which gives very little exposure to the industry) which takes considerably more time than it would at VCA or the like.

I would implore the committee to focus not on implementing lecture and seminar based education but to identify more efficient practical assessment techniques to achieve the desired results.

I support classes having an almost wholly practical component. The VCA is a unique institution in that it has in the past, concentrated so much on practical work. Its a great thing to have all the arts on one campus. The morale among staff and students does not seem good at the moment.

I think it is utterly ridiculous that the facilities department has been removed from the music school. How is that an improvement to my course? I will now likely need to carry my own amplifier to and from uni, which will only serve to use up valuable time that could be used for practice!

Music is learnt by doing it, not by talking about it. Students don't come to the VCA to write essays about the artform they are passionate about, they come to get their hands dirty, experiment and make mistakes, and ultimately to make the most of the guided experience-training that the fantastic teachers provide. Any changes should only enhance that ideal.

Changes have had an impact on my studies. More funding is needed for staff, particularly technical staff. In semester 2, 2009, the photography technical lecturer was sick for a week and the entire analogue department was shut down because there was no back up option. We need 2 full time technical lecturers.

Changes at VCAM have already diminished the quality of education I am receiving. Restrictions on choice of principal study and ensemble teachers at post-graduate level are patronizing and ill-considered. The loss of key staff will be devastating, and the idea of running Southbank music facilities online and administered from Parkville can only have come from someone who has no understanding what the job entails, let alone that it has always been understaffed!

The undergraduate course that I completed at VCA in 1997 had an excellent component of 'breadth subjects' that were of great value, as part of the Critical Studies units: Feldenkrais, Grant writing, and music technology were all part of this syllabus. I have grave doubts about the value of a Music Performance degree with a heavy component of Arts subjects - this is available at other institutions. VCA was established as a performance training school, and if it does not continue to have that purpose it will rapidly become irrelevant.

The reputation of the VCA has been tarnished, and I can already feel it in my industry outside this place.

Teachers who don't know if they are going to get fired or not invariably don't put as much effort into their teaching, and I have felt this at times with my teachers, as talented as they are.

The changes occurring at the VCA are destroying the hallmarks of the education I received during my time there. Future students will not be able to have the same opportunities I had :

1. personal one-on-one tuition from Australia's best musicians as well as highly esteemed international musicians
2. weekly workshops and classes with highly esteemed current practicing musicians
3. personally able to establish connections with industry professionals, having been face to face with them daily on campus
- 4...thus leading to regular real-life performance opportunities outside the curriculum of VCA but without a doubt directly as a result of studying there.
5. intense performance based study, forcing the student to seriously reflect upon their path as a musician, artist and how to evolve and contribute to the artistic world.
- 6...within an environment of equally elite peers and staff.

My time at the VCA was like a congregation of elite musicians, working together daily and discussing the art and music world, and how to better ourselves as artists, conceptually, technically, theoretically; offering feedback and having stimulating discussions, rehearsals and performances on a daily basis, always trying to push new boundaries and search for new sounds. The new structure is not conducive to this style of education. The new structure will impact upon this unique atmosphere, and turn the VCA into another sub-standard arts college churning out graduates with no imagination.

The worst thing has been the abuse of trust and lack of communication between the Dean and HODs to the staff and students.

My responses are based on my experience thus far, but I am concerned that if the proposed changes by Melbourne Uni were to be imposed, my answers a year or two from now could be quite different. I think that the balance of practical and theoretical teaching as it is at the moment is close to ideal, and would definitely not like the course to become any more academic than it is. I have friends studying music at institutions interstate which have been absolved by Universities who are constantly complaining that their courses are not nearly practical enough. VCA's course structure is the envy of arts institutions all over Australia, and it would be a huge mistake to alter it in any way.

The Melbourne Model, with its intention to significantly reduce practical training hours, simply does not support the ongoing training of elite artists in the fashion that is required of them to be competitive with the current professional industry standards.

The threat of its inception, and indeed the already induced 're structuring' has seen the loss of key staff and student interest in what has until now been the very centre of artistic and creative integrity, largely hinged on the elite practical training the Victorian College of the Arts has until now, always provided.

If someone honestly asked me 'should i go to VCA' in the next few years i'd honestly have to advise against it. People's educations are at risk. I don't get a sense that the administration really cares for it's current students. There is a lack of transparency and democracy and a lack of understanding, or willingness to listen to, the needs of the students. In fact, a lack of understanding of the educational needs of students is also lacking. I wonder if Sharman Pretty actually knows how much work and time has to be put into vocal training for actors and how taking even one or two hours a week away from those classes is going to be detrimental to an actor. Even if funding gets sorted out, the curriculum will still be a contentious issue and with people at the helm who are pretty bent on seeing the melbourne model and it's 'breadth' subjects introduced, what hope do we have? Actors want training. And so they'll go to the other institutions where their degrees and diplomas will actually stand for something in the profession.

And for the record, when i graduate, VCA will appear on my resume, not VCAM.

They changes are sad, there are no staff for teaching and the place is falling apart. I'm going into my 3rd year this year and have started looking at the Canberra School of Art for my honours year.

The proposed changes are terrible and will spell the end for the reputation of the college. If UoM are smart, they will act to reverse the changes and appeal to the federal government for funding.

Giving students and lectures more paperwork to complete in writing essays and reports is not going to benefit this creative arts industry. If Australia wants to have a broad and divers creative culture with professionals working in the various industries then we need to let the professionals (lectures) pass on their practical knowledge to the eager, very talented students selected for the various arts streams thought at the VCAM!

Uni Melbourne is breaking it's promise to save the VCA back in 2006 and now decided it knows better and totally weakening it's strong foundations! It's just not on!!!!

Disappointing, I have dreamed of studying at VCA for years, finally get to do so and then everything is in turmoil. Artists learn in a different way, they are right brained, not left brained commerce students sitting in lectures. The lecturing staff are superb and the method of teaching really works. Why would Uni of Melb want to mess with something so successful??

These changes have not affected me, as yet, however, they distress me a great deal. Not only because I have almost no idea what will happen to most of my subjects (none of my friends know, either) but because I do not wish to be trained as the musicians are at the Parkville campus, and it is turning out that i will no longer be taught how to be a great singer, and this genuinely scares me, that i will not be able to accomplish my dream. The University of Melbourne and the former Victorian College of the Arts have completely different teaching methods, and it should stay that way. The courses at both campuses can be improved with the collaboration of the two universities, but this is not achieved, nor should it be, by teaching students to perform at a mediocre level. This does not enable anyone, in any line of work, to compete with the best in the world.

I am greatly upset. I joined the VCAM for the quality and the prestige of learning from some of the greatest artists/teachers within the art field. Why would you take this away from us? From a young age I have always said I wanted to be an artist, whilst others were making up their mind to be marine biologists and family lawyers. I cried when I recieved my acceptance to the VCAM, and now this blissful feeling is taken away from all of us.

**SAVE THE VCA!!** There is nothing quite like it, it has changed my life being apart of this university.

The manner in which all the changes to VCA have been disgracefully handled. Students not allowed confidential information that directly affects their education. Decisions made with out proper consultation of all concerned. The basic integrity of the VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS has been entirely compromised and given the choice with the new changes I would not remotely consider commencing study at the VCA in the disgrace it has been put in to now. I would happily travel to the other side of the country for study than enroll for any post 2010 course proposed.

My view is that the VCA has already come to be seen in a less favourable light by other institutions and art practitioners by virtue of the changes suggested or occurring.

Furthermore although the art community in Melbourne and Australia is comparatively small, the influence of that small pool of talent is MARKEDLY disproportionate to its actual size and I firmly believe that as a result is not only the name of the VCA put to the stake but that the good name of Melbourne University is paying a price. I think it is an important point that is often overlooked in the 'us versus them' argument.

Relating to my practice in an immediate sense, more important than the tit-for-tat of contact hours or other details relating to the Melbourne model is staff morale, and I feel I have witnessed staff morale being affected across the board. Although staff remain incredibly professional, helpful and supportive, the changes as they stand now can't be said to have anything other than a definitive negligible impact.

All the changes seem to be moving the VCA in the wrong direction. It should be more like AFTRS in Syd. The more it becomes like Melbourne uni the less special and unique it becomes.

I have found that I would have been better off accepting offers to other schools, such as LaSalle or WAAPA. The institutions name has been sullied by recent events and I have personally lost training time. We now have less training time than any other comparable elite arts institution.

"Evil happens when good people say "it's just business""

I think there is no understanding that the changes here are being made for the students - the reason that the university exists.

I cannot believe that performance practice is not an area of research being utilised at this university. The reason the students at VCA are expert players are because of the expert staff at this campus - though I am not aware how many of them are left as of the end of 2009.

I feel that the two campuses of Music are two very different and important institutions and should be supported to continue as separate entities.

They both have different focuses and create different graduates and professionals. Obviously review is important to maintain a standard of professionalism but these changes are not adding to either place and only taking away opportunities for staff and students experiences and the beginning of their professional life.

I came here to learn skills I did not get in my first degree at The University of Melbourne in a Bachelor of Music so I enrolled in a Bachelor of Music Performance 2 years later. These changes are outrageous. The fact that Specialist Related Studies is an elective is just ridiculous. It should be a core subject for all musicians.

Please look up how many students are enrolling in the Community Access Program to enrol in the SRS program in the heritage BMusPerf in the Vocal Department - there is nowhere in Australia to learn this information.

I'm honoured to be studying classical voice but Parkville's lack of knowledge about my subject is making me more and more confused and upset.  
I've spent days at Parkville just walking around talking to each and every dazed faculty member, trying to find out about my course yet to be sent to someone else.

Well, it would be great if there would be some communication. Just a little you know. So we wouldn't have to spend our time worrying whether classes are going to be cut, or changed or merged or whatever. And it would be good to be able to access a timetable sooner rather than later.

They have had an impact:

Reduced staff and staff sessions

Reduced semesters

Reduced safety in the workshop

Reduced technical know-how in the workshop

Reduced workshop access time

The sculpture department is suffering under the changes made. With no sculpture specific technician the workshop is now less safe without adequate supervision. There is also shortage of technical support.

I believe these reductions (which are across the board throughout the art school) make our workplaces less safe and our education inferior.

## Appendix – the online survey

# VCA and Music Student Survey 2010

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. This is an anonymous survey and we will not be able to identify you nor link your responses back to you. Responses will be used as input into discussions with the University of Melbourne regarding the future of the VCA and Music.

If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact the UMSU Marketing & Research Officer, Marisa Simanjuntak, via e-mail at [m.simanjuntak@union.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:m.simanjuntak@union.unimelb.edu.au).

Instructions on completing survey:

For multiple choice questions, please choose ONE option that best represents your answer unless otherwise stated.

If you are not a current student at the Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music (VCAM), please answer based on your most recent study experience there.

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\* Required

Which of these best describes your study status at VCAM? \*

- Current student.
- Started studying at VCAM but have postponed my studies for now.
- Recently finished my studies and awaiting my graduation ceremony.
- Graduated and awarded with a degree.
- Studied at VCAM but left before finishing my degree.
- Other:

What discipline are you undertaking/did you undertake at VCAM? \* Choose more than one if applicable

- Art
- Dance
- Drama
- Film and Television

- Music
- Production
- Music Theatre
- Puppetry
- Other:

What type of degree are you undertaking/did you attain at VCAM? \* Choose more than one if applicable

- Bachelor
- Graduate certificate or diploma
- Master (by coursework or research)
- PhD
- Other:

How important was the name 'Victorian College of the Arts' to your decision to study there? \*

- Not important at all
- Less important
- Quite important
- Very important

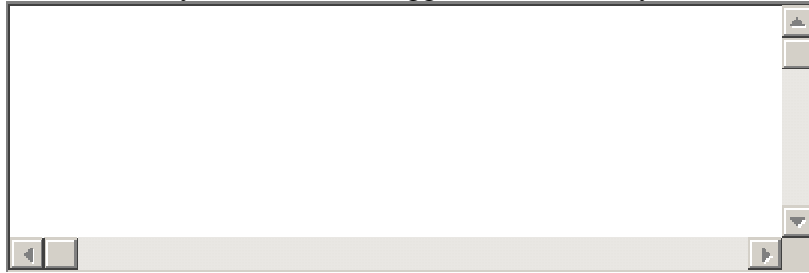
How many hours per week do you think should be spent on practice-based learning?

- Up to 10
- 11 – 20
- 21 – 30
- 31 – 40
- More than 40

With the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by choosing a number between 1 and 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Leave unanswered if the statement is not applicable to you.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
Learning the theory behind my craft (e.g. history of theatre, dance analysis, anatomy, politics behind theatre etc.) is important to my overall education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having academic skills such as researching and essay or report writing is beneficial for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount of time devoted to practice-based learning in my program, including external classes, is sufficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is a good mixture of practice-based and written assessment in my program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would have preferred to focus on practice and attain a vocational degree rather than a full degree (like Bachelor, Master, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall, I am/was satisfied with my course structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel that I have received/am receiving a well-rounded education that enables me to compete with the best in the world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Write here any comments or suggestions on how your course could be improved

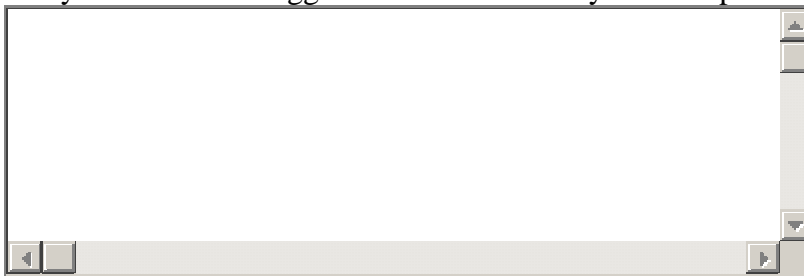


With the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by choosing a number between 1 and 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Leave unanswered if the statement is not applicable to you.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
I enjoy(ed) the common subjects offered by VCAM's Centre for Ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know about the Melbourne Model and its offering of breadth subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important that my lectures and tutorials all take place at VCAM (Southbank)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

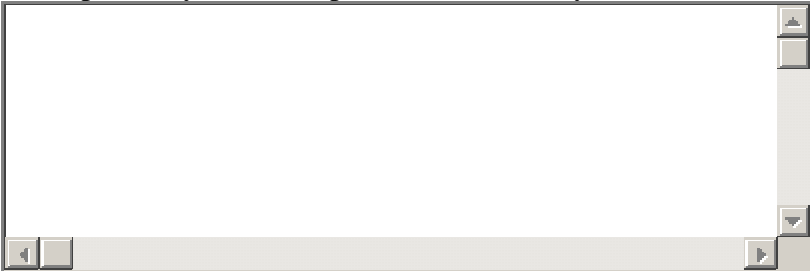
Please write any comments or suggestions here about any of the topics raised in previous

questions.



Finally, whether they have had an impact on you or not, please tell us what you think about the

changes happening at VCAM.



**No. 369**

6 March 2010

Dear Review Committee,

I am writing to you as a current third year drama student and one representative of the concerns of many. Despite finding the lack of publicity about the discussion paper to students frustrating, (i.e. no emails to the student portal asking for input) I applaud the sentiment of giving students, staff, industry and members of the public a say in what is a very important educational institution to the Melbourne Arts Industry, economy and society.

This is an extremely important issue for Victoria and Australia. Arts schools are limited and their requirements are unique.

I have been a student heavily involved in the fight for the future of the VCA. I was a key organiser of the protest action held in August of last year. The protest has been frequently misinterpreted by senior VCAM management, as well as the University as an "hysterical" act based on "misinformation." I would like to clear up this misinterpretation by stating that the strong student and community action resulted from a lack of consultation and information made publicly available about the future of the VCA. It should be noted that at no point prior to the protest action largely put together by students had there been any mention of a discussion paper or consultation process about the future of the VCA to students.

I am now glad to be able to write to the review panel, and am glad that my colleagues have had the same opportunity, though I don't feel that were I to express an opinion, that it would be considered fairly.

I am concerned and have been for some time about the management of the college in its present form and what this means for the college's future. In the discussion paper, a demerger between the VCA and the University is presented as an option. Yet already the University has taken over management of the VCA. There is one sign left at the VCA stating that it is the VCA and so how can I indeed feel that the university considers it an applicable option for our future.

Furthermore, the University has chosen to elect Heads of Schools to represent the different disciplines of the VCA. How it can be the University's (or Dean's) decision to elect a review panel which is making decisions about the future of something that they have a heavy stake in and not be considered biased is beyond me. Of the 14 members of the review panel, the Heads of Schools, make up nearly one third of the review panel. And unlike the student representative, and student union president Shane Woon, who is a democratically elected representative of stakeholders in this review, the Heads of Schools are not democratically elected.

Why is this a problem? Three of these Heads of Schools, are new to the VCA. They bring with them a new philosophy, structures and ideas etc... about how they would like the new VCA or faculty of VCAM to run. They were hired by the university. They are employees of the University. There is no doubt about their entitlement to bring their energy and ideas to the table in their new place of power, but really, how is a demerger, an independent VCA, a VCA that holds onto the principles on which it was founded, that carries forward the spirit it had pre-university merger, to really be a consideration when the college and indeed, the review panel, "defining the future" for the VCA is already tainted by the considerations of the University.

I will give example to this. While representing students to the Dean and the Heads of Schools as part of a group of students who attended weekly or perhaps fortnightly meetings with the Dean and Heads of Schools, we were exposed not to consultation as we had requested but to a group of individuals unwilling to consider life at the VCA without the Melbourne Model. Now this is not to make a statement about the validity of the Melbourne Model, but instead to say that the Melbourne Model shouldn't be the first and last consideration for the VCA but only an option which can just as quickly be deemed inappropriate as it is suggested.

I do not feel that the review panel will have the appropriate insight or diversity of interests to truly make democratic decisions about the future of the VCA. I do not feel that the university who has removed almost all trace of the logo of the Victorian College of the Arts, and now joined our music school with their own while attempting to conduct an unbiased review of the future of the VCA that is suggestive of the probably popular option of demerger, can claim to have integrity of process. With all due respect to the democratically elected and third-party members of the review panel, I cannot make a submission, because I believe the process is flawed and my submission will be of no consequence.

I am currently a PhD student at the VCAM Art School.

I am going to confine my discussion to the VCAM Art School, as it is the only one of the schools that I have some knowledge of. I do have some experience in working as an artist and I have also lived in Germany. I have lectured sessionally in 5 different art schools in Melbourne including the VCA. I am not an alumnus of the VCA.

I have particularly enjoyed lecturing at the VCA as I have found the students engaging and inspiring. It seemed to have attracted and selected talented and keen students. In some of the other institutions that I have taught, there has been more ambivalence from some of the students of their vocation of becoming artists.

I wonder how being under the umbrella of the University alone can assure the VCAM Art School's future. The School needs to have a diversity of supporters I am mindful that there are a number of philanthropists that have endowed parts and I hope that the future institution honours the wishes of these philanthropists. I think the state and Federal governments need to independently fund the VCAM Art School as well. The VCA Art School needs also to re-form a connection with the NGV. Without a limited autonomy, the VCAM remains vulnerable to the shifts that University of Melbourne makes. I am mindful of recent precedents where Deakin University sold off the Stonington site. I am also mindful of **The Towards 2011**, discussion paper that was recently released by the university of Melbourne ( [http://www.provost.unimelb.edu.au/towards\\_2011/report\\_feedback](http://www.provost.unimelb.edu.au/towards_2011/report_feedback) ) which may see further erosions of the VCAM's strengths, if its recommendations were implemented.

Of course, there are incredible benefits for both institutions remaining aligned. Student from the VCAM Art School can have the benefit of being able to take other subjects from the University of Melbourne. Just as Students from very different disciplines can have access to understanding artistic processes and develop an understanding of how art can function as a discursive element in cultural dialogue. This would also give courses in the humanities from Parkville such as the History of Art, Art conservation and curatorial courses hands on experience.

I would advocate a core studio based course in Fine Art, with side streams where other parts of the university can engage with the art school.

The core studio course would have a reduced intake. Small enough so all places can be supported by scholarship positions (cooper Union is an example) to guarantee merit and equality based entrance these places could be tagged by philanthropy as a way of attracting donors.

Small enough to attract the round table funding (as I am sure the Federal Government would only want to provide ongoing funding to a limited number of places).

The VCA schools may have to be separated to attract the round table funds as other parts of the VCAM would duplicate other schools in Australia; Mindful that there is no other art school that is getting this funding (although there maybe other schools in other cities already trying to position themselves for it). The VCA is well positioned for this funding as it has helped to produce artists who are not only masters of their disciplines but also of intellectual and conceptual rigor this is not always the case with some of the other art schools in Australia.

There are other more extreme solutions (an idea put forward by a colleague of mine) to secure regular funding and that is developing the site with a series of towers and VCAM having a series of floors allocated to it and the sale or rent of the other floors providing a re-invested perpetual income for the running of the schools.

I think it is important to acknowledge that the institution has been significantly degraded through continual attrition of funds this has put extraordinary pressure on tenured academic staff who have been stretched further to make up for the significant loss of sessional staff. Despite this the VCAM Art School still produces some of the leading national and international artists from Australia.

Its success is not necessarily reflected in the overseas awareness of it. It needs to have the resources for it to assume its appropriate place in international discourse. The Center of Ideas and the Margaret Lawrence Gallery and some of the staff have made projects involving interesting linkages with artists' internationally. But resources available to the institution such as what they can offer visiting artists has been minimal, The programs need to offer adequate incentives for visiting artists (indeed it is often impossible to get a visa for a one off visiting artist talk to pay them appropriately this needs to be addressed with university and foreign affairs, at other schools I have know of visiting artists to have been paid through book vouchers from American multinational bookstores or alternatively with modest lunch shouts).

The RMIT University International studio program is exemplary in creating an international discourse with its network of studios in Asia and also reciprocal studios in Europe. Like RMIT, the VCAM Art School should be working more closely with institutions such as ACCA and the NGV. The VCAM must not even have the resources to subscribe and post listing on

<http://artandeducation.net/>. The authoritative website on all things happening international in relation to art and education!

One idea would be to establish a gallery at the NGV international where visiting artists can have joint residency and exhibitions and do projects with students and local artists at VCA the proximity is perfect. In Germany I have observed that there is much greater sharing between institutions. The VCAM Art School should not only be a pedagogical and studio based institution but also a site where interaction, projects and discourse can happen. The Center of Ideas and Margaret Lawrence Gallery have been implementing This but it need to be more highly resourced I would suggest that many of the best art schools (eg Staedle) have significant programs of visiting Artists (curators philosophers etc) where the visitor would do a lecture, work on a project with students (and/or other artists) and give individual and group tutorials with students. Of course art education is changing and the postgraduate research area is growing and having interesting and unexpected impacts and evolving the institution and staff in this area are pioneering new methodologies.

Of interest for me in seeing where art and the academia is heading is a recent symposium at the Tate titled: Creative Scholars Research Economies in Art and Design available in 6 hours of free podcast on <http://www.tate.org.uk/onlineevents/podcast/feed.xml>

I have also found a podcast of **Robert Storr talking in relation to the Arts School and its relationship within the university:** <http://deimos3.apple.com/WebObjects/Core.woa/Feed/yale.edu.1322259033.01322259041>

I just would like to make the point that these opinions are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of those close to me.

**No. 371**

12 March 2010

**Defining the Future for the VCA at the University of Melbourne Discussion Paper:  
RESPONSE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SCULPTURE AND SPATIAL PRACTICE  
12<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

We express our thanks at being included in discussion on the necessary expansion and evolution of the Victorian College of the Arts. As a reflection of ongoing meetings, this letter voices the concerns of all Undergraduate Sculpture and Spatial Practice students in the School of Art.

The student body of the S&SP department of VCA believes that there are two immediate issues that need to be raised for discussion concerning our current curriculum: ***the loss of sessional staff and the loss of a specific sculpture technician.***

In addition to informing the Review Committee of the reality of the S&SP student experience in 2010 we will detail our experiences of the teaching philosophy of the School of Art as a prominent component of the VCA.

**THE LOSS OF SESSIONAL STAFF MEMBERS**

Our immediate concern regards recent and sudden changes to our departments staffing. Upon resuming our academic year, we find that our department has:

- **Lost five sessional staff members,**
- **Is run now by only three lecturers and**
- **No specific technician.**

The remaining staff must now stretch their time over forty-seven undergraduate students - a larger number than previous years - whilst juggling other responsibilities such as post-graduate supervision and administrative duties.

The staff of the S&SP Department at VCA takes pride in delivering a rigorous education. Whilst they demand a scrupulous work ethic in order to prepare us for our own professional practices after VCA, we contest the pressure they have been put under to merely maintain the caliber of previous years.

Until now, this type of education has been made possible through a variety of dedicated staff members who in the past have:

- Promoted compulsory attendance to the studio 9.30am -5.30pm, 5 days a week.
- Given us access to a wide range of practicing artists and professionals in the industry via group and **individual tutorials.**
- Allowed Workshop access daily from 9.30am - 7.30pm to learn, develop and refine technical skills.

Below is a brief summary of the general contributions the lost staff members possess that we are no longer privy to:

- All are practicing artists.
- Excellent critical input and advice on a professional level.
- Practical and conceptual input aiding the development of all students work.
- Access to a range of opinions, resources and knowledge.

Their skills and interests are **fundamental** to the development of our practices as students of sculpture and spatial practice. The more specific skills of each of the personnel we no longer have access to, are detailed below:

#### **Ryan Foote**

- Our workshop technician in previous years whose employment ultimately allowed us access to the workshop after hours.
- Taught technical skills as well as **safe and effective handling of tools and machinery** within all areas of the workshop.
- He is currently a prominent practicing artist in Melbourne and has contributed much to the practical and conceptual development of many students work.

#### **Scott Mitchell**

- Currently completing a PhD.
- Offered the highest degree of academic and technical ability.
- His valuable contribution included: electrical engineering, woodworking, welding, mould-making, casting and rigorous critical feedback.

### **Kat Clarke**

- Completed her M.A. in Fine Art in 2009 at the VCA.
- The Vulcan Steel Award Scholarship funded Kat's tutorship.
- We have lost a profitable academic and technical link to an emerging artist and current post-graduate student.

### **Kate McMahon**

- Holds a M.A in Fine Art
- Professional Landscape Architect.
- Her expertise involves: training in issues related to professional developmental processes, self-promotion, presentation/public speaking, administration, managing finances and working within related industries.

### **Carolyn Eskdale**

- Currently completing a PhD at Melbourne University.
- Her core interests related to site-specificity, installation practice, process and expanded spatial practices.

### **Laura Woodward**

- Recently commenced a PhD at Melbourne University.
- The Manager of an extensive artist studio complex.
- Her contribution included metal work, electronics and the managing of commissions and public projects.

## **THE LOSS OF THE SPECIFIC SCULPTURE TECHNICIAN**

The loss of the sculpture technician hinders both the S&SP Department and the School of Art Workshop. We believe it poses serious Occupational Health and Safety risk to all students as:

- **Sam Muratore is now the only technician available and his primary job is to supervise the workshop for the entire population of the School of Art.**

**To ensure student health and safety**, while utilising the very large, segmented workshop spaces, there must be adequate supervision of students. It contains potentially hazardous equipment that we feel requires more than one supervisor present to monitor the use of this equipment.

In addition to OH&S issues, the loss of a departmental technician has resulted in the reduction of workshop access. Our studies are connected to the workshop at a **fundamental** level and restricting our access to this facility will impact greatly upon the development and quality of our work. It was demonstrated to us in the first week back at school that under current VCA standards:

- **Whenever Sam is unavailable for any reason, the workshop will be closed.**
- Flexible working hours outside of scheduled studio time is no longer possible without additional technicians.

Living in this current economic climate, students more than ever, are required to work part time jobs in order to pay rent, bills and increased university fees. In previous years when the workshop was open until 7.30pm – **many of the S&SP students utilised the workshop until this time.**

This access enabled us to develop the best quality of work to a high degree of ambition and resolve. We are extremely concerned that we no longer have this access and flexibility. In comparison with other related

institutions, access hours at the VCA have been minimal for some time, therefore to cut those, further compromises our very status as a competitive Australian art school.

## ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

The Fine Art course at the VCA has for some time provided a unique critical and studio-based program. Aside from personally developing our work in the studio and workshop we are enrolled in and exposed to a range of interests through the Critical and Theoretical Studies and the Centre for Ideas programs.

We feel that the Critical and Theoretical Studies program provides us with adequate academic content or “depth” in the following ways:

- It feeds our work by delivering lectures and tutorials focusing on developing knowledge of and interpreting the historical art record.
- We receive tuition on visual analysis and constructing written responses to artworks.
- A platform for group critique of our presentations and other art related literature is made possible by this program.

The Centre for Ideas program, although in need of constant reworking to suit student feedback provides us with “breadth” in the form of professional development by exposing us to:

- A variety of industry speakers and artist forums.
- A choice of special interest seminars rooted in, for example Philosophical, Political, Socio-economical, Scientific and Cultural concerns.
- Collaborative opportunities within other Departments.

If the choice were present to take a “breadth” subject at the Parkville Campus, we believe that many students at the School of Art would take up the offer while others would prefer to study subjects offered on the Southbank Campus for instance, Digital Applications and Multimedia.

The structure has enabled the historical degree to deliver specialised, studio-based education while incorporating broader critical, practical and academic concerns crucial to the development of independent art practitioners. **As a department within VCA we feel that the integrity of the program we originally signed up for is being negated. We believe it is under immediate threat for the following reasons:**

- The gradual restructuring of our curriculum has begun to undermine the specialised approach that this school is renowned for.
- We are faced with immediate changes that challenge our very ability to remain productive in the short-term.
- This year with limited staff, the quality of the teaching previously delivered by a staff cohort who possessed a range of skills, experiences and differences in approach, is in jeopardy.
- As previously noted, the situation at the time of writing is that the workshop machinery will lie dormant as students are locked out, struggling to merely book consultation with the little staff that remains.

**We call for the immediate reinstatement of a sculpture technician, expansion of access to the sculpture workshop, and the appointment of sessional staff to deliver the standard of education promised to us when we enrolled in The Victorian College of the Arts.**

We support the notion of change and adaptation to a new environment at the VCA, as long as ***the education of art is based on a philosophy of hands-on, process oriented and discussion rich process.*** To be asked to adapt to an educational environment where there are less professional artists as teachers, with less working access and no reduction in fees is ludicrous.

If VCA students are to compete with and contribute to the national and global art community, we must have training in an environment that is of the highest quality. Not an environment that will compromise the quality of students work and in turn, the quality of graduating artists.

We feel that the services provided at the VCA were approaching this standard until recent cuts occurred, and we are extremely anxious about our current situation. We are fearful that the school will cease to appeal to talented Australian students let alone to our International counterparts as the artist training institution it is renowned for.

Please consider this contribution by the Sculpture and Spatial Practice Department when making any decisions about the future of the VCA. We look forward to the opportunity to present our case to the Review Committee.

Thank you for your time,

On behalf of undergraduate S&SP students within the School of Art: