



16/09/2024

**Response to the NSW Government Parliamentary *Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales***

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**Introduction**

During the *Inquiry into arts and music education and training in New South Wales*, the committee has received evidence suggesting that primary school teachers do not feel confident to teach music. This briefing paper provides an overview of the arts and music education provided to students during initial teacher education at University of New South Wales.

**Music in the NSW primary curriculum**

As one of eight key learning areas in the NSW K-12 curriculum, the Creative and Performing Arts Key Learning area comprises four artforms: Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts. Visual Arts and Music were established as subjects of study as part of the Wyndham Scheme in the late 1960's on the grounds that they provide students with learning in one visual and performing artform K-6.

Until 2024 the NSW Education Act, Visual Arts and Music have been mandated for study in the NSW K-6 Curriculum. Dance and Drama were considered optional, having typically been mapped to learning in Physical Health, Development and Physical Education and English respectively.

Within NSW Curriculum Reforms (NESA, 2023), adjustments have been made to the NSW Education Act which require the teaching of all four artforms in primary schools K-6. While the mandate for all artforms to be taught in primary schools is welcome, it adds to the pressure generalist primary teachers experience in implementing the Creative Arts Syllabus in deep and meaningful ways.

Arts educators in general have been concerned about the lack of professional learning support and time allocated to teacher education in the Creative Arts KLA. There are also concerns about and evidence of a narrowing of the primary curriculum given the emphasis on NAPLAN results as measures of student achievement and comparisons of those on a global level<sup>1</sup>.

**Background - Initial Teacher Education**

The NSW Education Standards Authority requires that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in primary programs meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at Graduate level (AISTL, 2024).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://lens.monash.edu/@education/2021/05/10/1383196/learning-from-disruption-why-we-should-rethink-the-place-of-naplan-in-our-schools>

Providers of primary ITE must also meet the Program Standards for ensure that make provision for pre-service teachers “to study in each of the learning areas of the primary school curriculum sufficient to equip teachers to teach across the years of primary schooling” (AITSL, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programs/standards-and-procedures>)

There is provision for ITE programs to support graduates to be specialist teachers in different KLAs. Typically, opportunities to engage in specialisations in the Creative Arts KLA are minimal, with teaching specialisations in English, Mathematics and Science prioritised by NESA in NSW. There are no such opportunities for preservice teachers to specialise in areas such the subjects within the Creative Arts.

Further, very few schools in the public and catholic systems employ specialist arts teachers, leaving generalist teachers to rely on limited exposure to arts education in their ITE programs. Many independent schools employ specialist arts educators and music tutors to run co-curricular and extra-curricular programs. Anecdotally, many primary arts teachers, including music specialists are trained secondary teachers who possess deep discipline and pedagogical knowledge.

***Schedule 1 for Program Standard 4.2: Mandatory content requirements for primary ITE programs*** (AITSL, 2024, p. 53) sets out the minimum requirements.

## Schedule 1 for Program Standard 4.2



### Primary Programs

All primary programs must include study in each of the learning areas of the primary school curriculum sufficient to equip teachers to teach across the years of primary schooling.

#### Undergraduate programs – mandatory content requirements

Discipline and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies<sup>8</sup> comprise at least one-half of the program (i.e. normally two years of full-time-equivalent study), including at least:

	<b>English/literacy</b> – discipline and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies	At least one-half of a year EFTSL, including at least one-eighth of a year EFTSL for early reading instruction <sup>9</sup>
	<b>Mathematics/numeracy</b> – discipline and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies	At least one-quarter of a year EFTSL
	<b>Science</b> – discipline and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies	At least one-eighth of a year EFTSL

The remainder of the program may be structured to include extension or specialist studies in priority areas or related curriculum areas.

#### Graduate entry programs – mandatory content requirements

Graduate entry programs must include one year of full-time-equivalent study of discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies across the learning areas of the primary school curriculum, including at least:

	<b>English/literacy</b> – discipline and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies	At least three-eighths of a year EFTSL, including at least one-eighth of a year EFTSL for early reading instruction <sup>10</sup>
	<b>Mathematics/numeracy</b> – discipline and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies	At least one-quarter of a year EFTSL
	<b>Science</b> – discipline and discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies	At least one-eighth of a year EFTSL

These programs may include up to one-quarter of a year of full-time-equivalent study of relevant discipline studies as elective units which could be undertaken by applicants who do not fully meet prerequisite discipline study requirements.

<sup>8</sup> Discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies contribute to the requirement for at least two years of equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) in professional studies outlined in Program Standard 4.1.

<sup>9</sup> Early reading instruction should address evidence-based practice in the following elements: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and oral language.

<sup>10</sup> Early reading instruction should address evidence-based practice in the following elements: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and oral language.

As the above shows, emphasis is placed on the prescription of English, Mathematics and Science in undergraduate and graduate entry ITE primary programs, constituting approximately two-thirds of the program. These prescriptions alongside requirements to address the three domains of professional knowledge in the APSTs, as well as National Priority Area Elaborations (classroom management, special education, information and communication technologies, literacy and numeracy, Students with disability, teaching students with English as an additional language or dialect, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education), leaving little opportunity to explore in any depth areas within the Humanities or the four Creative Arts subjects.

### Issues

Program structures are tight and lack flexibility due to the prescriptive nature of the NESA requirements which UNSW as an ITE provider must be compliant. With the prioritisation of the core

KLAs of English, Maths and Science, and the requirements to address a further five KLAs, and mandatory core education content, there is little room for providing anything further than the bare minimum for time and content for the four distinctive and unique disciplines within the Creative Arts KLA.

UNSW offers two ITE programs in primary education in which music education is taught. Music is taught alongside the requirements to address Visual Arts, Dance, and Drama within the Creative Arts KLA, the other 7 KLAs, Education Core studies and two professional experience placements.

1. **The UNSW Bachelor of Primary (Hons)** is a 4-year undergraduate program. It features two courses of study in the Creative Arts. The first is a Discipline course, the second is a Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment (CPA) course. Due to time constraints within the program, each of these courses addresses all of the four artforms. The teaching of Music in these discipline studies and curriculum, pedagogy and assessment courses is afforded a quarter of the course time. In a 10-week term, pre-service teachers receive approximately 2.5 hours of lecture time supported by 5 hours of tutorial workshops in Music education.
2. **The UNSW Master of Teaching (Primary) (MTP)** is a postgraduate ITE program. As a fast-track, intensive program, students complete the MTP in 1.3 or 1.7 year modes. To enrol in this program, preservice teachers must have an existing qualification in a discipline aligned with the K-6 curriculum, however, few present with previous qualifications in the arts or with specific expertise music.

The MTP features only one CPA course of study in the Creative Arts. It addresses the K-Creative Arts Syllabus content, how to teach it and how to assess student learning. This course addresses all of the four artforms in the Creative Arts KLA, with the teaching of Music afforded a quarter of the course time. In a 10-week term, pre-service teachers receive approximately 2.5 hours of lecture time supported by 5 hours of tutorial workshops in Music education.

### **Recommendations/Conclusions**

This provision of time for arts education, and in particular Music education and training, is insufficient in supporting teachers to develop adequate knowledge, skills and understandings of discipline practice, let alone the requisite pedagogical strategies which enable them to interpret syllabus content and implement it in rich and engaging ways in the K-6 classroom. The rationalisation of four rich, complex, and unique arts disciplines into a single syllabus has also contributed to the devaluing of arts education in the curriculum. By positioning the arts subjects in this way, curriculum authorities typically assume commonality among them, a move that results in the prescription of generic content that reduces the rigour of each discipline as a unique body of knowledge that can be taught. These factors contribute to the lack of confidence primary teachers experience when faced with the challenge of teaching a curriculum that they are ill-equipped to understand and implement in deep and meaningful ways. Unfortunately, students are the recipients of a less than desirable learning experiences in all of the artforms represented in the Creatives Arts KLA.

## References

AITSL (2024). *Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia*, [https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/accreditation\\_guidelines\\_2021\\_17-feb-2021\\_contents\\_web\\_final.pdf?sfvrsn=9276dd3c\\_0](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/accreditation_guidelines_2021_17-feb-2021_contents_web_final.pdf?sfvrsn=9276dd3c_0)

NESA (2023) *NSW Government response to the NSW Curriculum Review final report*. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-04/NSW-Government-Response-to-the-NSW-Curriculum-Review.pdf>

Why should we rethink the place of NAPLAN in our schools

<https://lens.monash.edu/@education/2021/05/10/1383196/learning-from-disruption-why-we-should-rethink-the-place-of-naplan-in-our-schools>

Focus on what student need to lift success at school, not NAPLAN

<https://www.sstuwa.org.au/pdfgenerate/3183>